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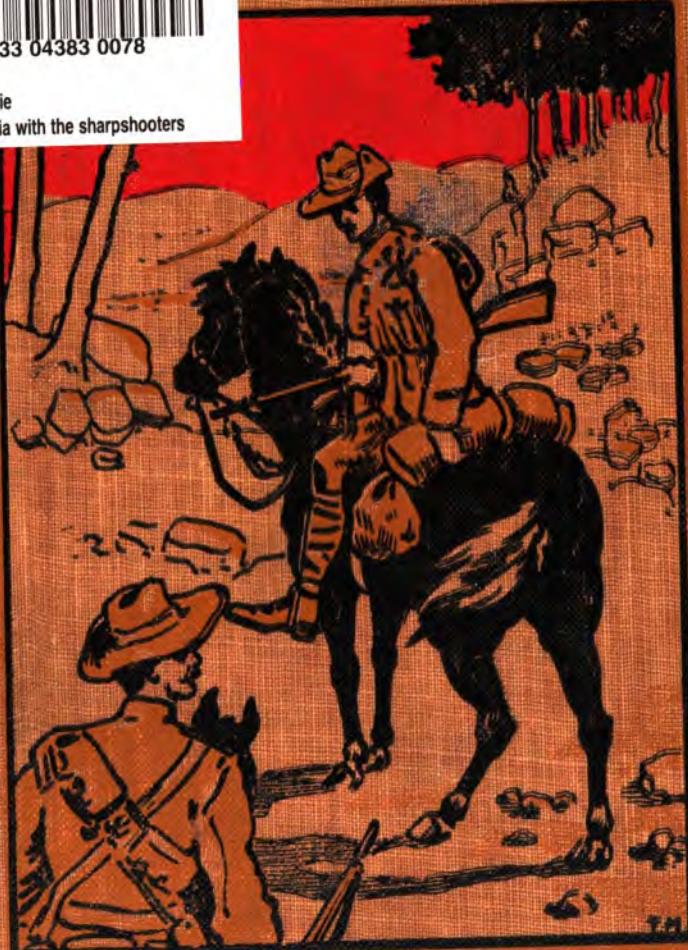


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Through Rhodesia with the sharpshooters



Through Rhodesia
with the
SHARPSHOOTERS

By RENNIE STEVENSON.

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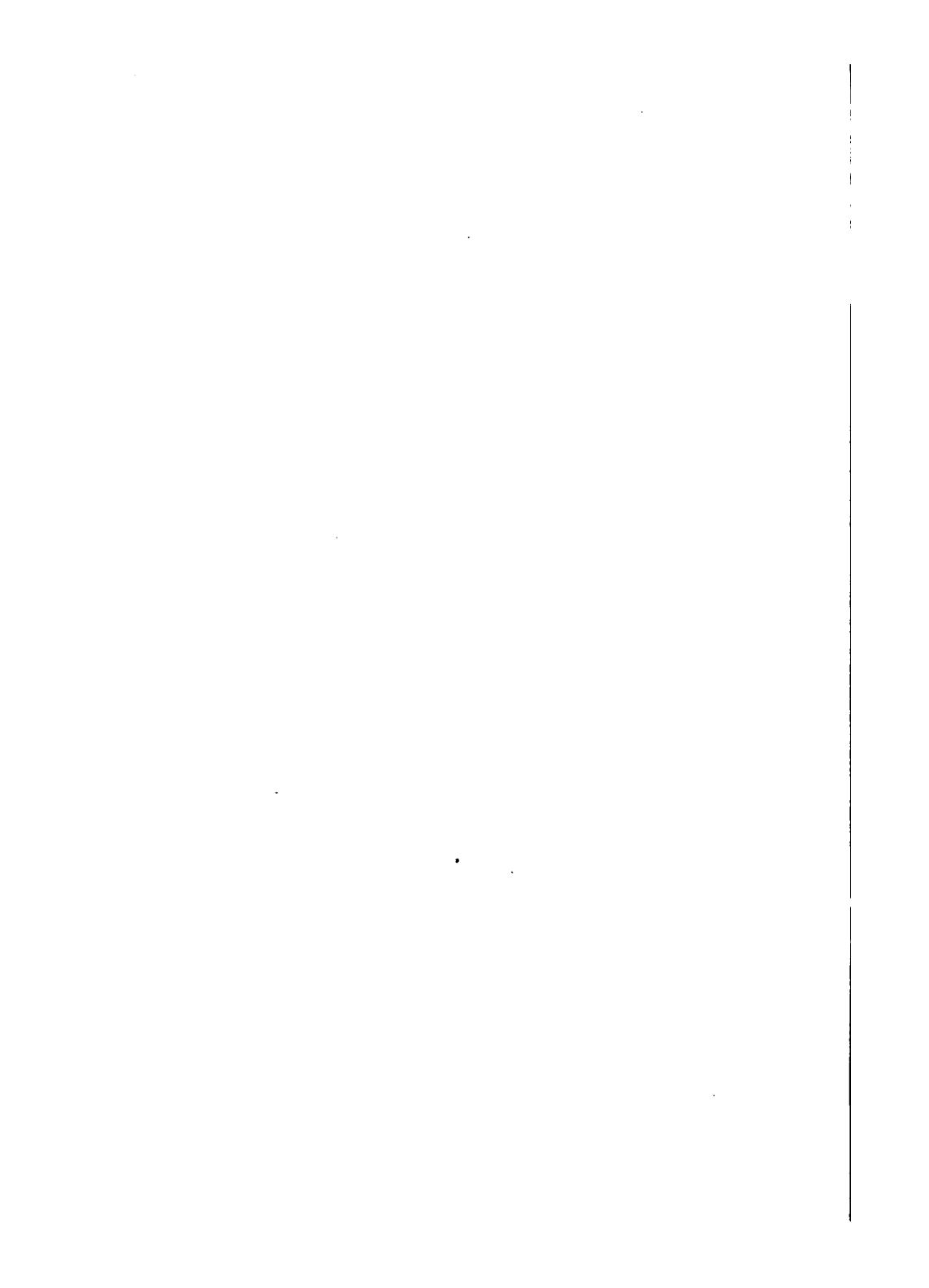


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Through Rhodesia with
the Sharpshooters





THROUGH RHODESIA
WITH THE
SHARPSHOOTERS

BY
RENNIE STEVENSON

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W. C. LINDSEY

W.

DEDICATED
TO
The Earl of Dunraven
FOR HIS KINDNESS AND THOUGHTFULNESS
TO US
ON LAND AND SEA



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Through Rhodesia with the Sharpshooters

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

THE Sharpshooters, a corps of irregular horse raised by Lord Dunraven, left Britain for South Africa. They were composed of all classes, knit together by the common bond of love of Empire, and a desire to see the pomp and circumstance of war on the veldt. The corps arrived at Beira in May, and after some weeks' delay in that sleepy town, they began their trek southward, ostensibly to assist in the relief of Mafeking, at that time beleaguered by the Boer commandos.

Lord Roberts, however, accomplished that long-looked-for consummation ere the Sharpshooters were of service. My intention is to try and give the outside public an idea of the inside working of a squadron trekking.

The following pages are in some measure the autobiography of a trooper in the Sharpshooters.

I do not write of the war critically, historically, philosophically. I leave that to pens more capable of telling the passion, the terror, the frenzy of war. My desire is to present the life of a trooper on the march, with its escapes, its excitements, its exultations, its humours, its pathos ; and if I have succeeded in that endeavour, the measure of my success is the satisfaction of the reader.

CHAPTER I.

BEIRA.

OUR hearts were gladdened by the sight of this town, even although it was only a few houses built on the banks of an evil-smelling river. It was our destination.

Our real journey had now begun.

When we sailed gently into our anchorage we found that the several transports containing the Australian Bushmen, Canadians, New Zealanders and Victorians had arrived before us. We were received with enthusiastic cheers as we passed each colony's transport, and, needless to say, we

as lustily returned them. We were all anxious, of course, to see these men, because they were to be our companions in sorrow and joy, sunshine and trial, through Rhodesia.

Owing to the total inadequacy of the railway—2 feet 6 inches, I think, was the gauge—we were kept lying a week in the river without being allowed to disembark. To have so great a number of troops hanging about a fever-stricken town like Beira was surely a grave error of judgment on someone's part. Had we arrived say a week or two after each other, there would have been no bungling and delay at such camps as Twenty-three Mile Peg and Bamboo Creek, and consequently less fever and fewer deaths among us.

To try and describe the chagrin and disgust of the men at being obliged to

lie so near the shore on such an uninteresting river as the Pungwe and not allowed to land after being four weeks already on board ship, would be impossible. If it had been a busy river with ships passing inwards and outwards, it might have lent at least some variety ; but here we were, stuck on a river the smell from which was daily getting worse, till latterly everything one ate tasted of that awful odour. It wasn't a smell to be played with; it couldn't be nursed like some smells and become accustomed to. Oh ! no. Asleep one dreamed of it, awake it hovered round like some arch fiend. It wasn't one of those smells one could get friendly with, and make a chum of, then go and stand oneself a drink and keep the smell of the liquor in one's nostrils and forget it that way. No, no ;

this was a smell that was your master. Even if one had had a small spray of the finest 'Otto de Roses' constantly playing in his nostrils day and night, it would have to be shut off, as sooner or later the lovely perfume would seem to be changing into the somewhat unknown (unless to those unfortunate individuals who have visited Beira) fragrance of 'Eau de Pungwe.' I was thinking seriously of catching some of the aroma, solidifying it and sending it home, after taking out patent rights, to be used at house parties, or when suffering from a severe attack of a cousin from Liverpool or such-like entertainers. A chunk of the smell could be placed in their room, and if that didn't shift them nothing would. But possibly a new house would have to be purchased or a removal instituted. Even

now, though thousands of miles from Beira, I imagine that smell—like some evil spirit—coming over on the breeze, and devastating a peaceful land.

After this digression on an odoriferous subject I shall come back to the original theme under discussion—Beira. There are two or three hotels on the beach which look comfortable, at least that was their outward appearance. I needn't mention that I was not in them, as being a trooper, and not having the time, let us say, to enter, I had only to gaze on them longingly and watch those who had money—I mean time—come out looking happy. Another feature of the town was the trolley cars, or, to speak in Beira parlance, the 'Push, push.' A funny incident in one of these took place. One fellow did not know that they were

private cars, and jumped into one, at the same time calling on some more of his chums to follow suit. They did so, but the niggers who supplied the motive power of the vehicle refused to push.

The troopers came out of the car again, made a search up by-lanes and side streets, and at last found other two niggers lying asleep in the shade of a tree. They rudely awakened the coloured gentlemen, took them by the ear to the car and ordered them to push, while the troopers got inside. They could see by the niggers' excited speech and gesticulations that something was wrong, but this only made the soldiers more anxious to get the niggers to shove. Latterly, after much threatening, the car started on its way. It was not going, however, as fast as the others on the rails opposite,

and the slowness was attributed to the niggers' laziness. One of the troopers leant over the back of the car and proceeded to encourage the niggers with his switch. At this, the blacks with countenances that plainly said, "We may be led but not driven," stopped pushing altogether. Again the soldiers got out of the car, made a ring round their unwilling servants, and discussed the best methods of chastisement. One suggested tying them on behind and making them push, another suggested harnessing them in front so that their actions could be seen by all on board, while another proposed the extreme measure of walking. The last idea was immediately scouted, as it would leave the natives victorious, and that would have been a British reverse the very first day they had landed at Beira.

Latterly the proposition was moved and carried that they should drag the miscreants over to the Portuguese policeman to consult him regarding their fate.

They might as well have spoken to the Sphinx! The custodian of the law, who tried to impress them with the importance of his position, either thought the niggers were beneath him, or wouldn't take the trouble to tell them what to do. One of the fellows there and then wanted to knock lumps off the placid policeman for his want of civility, and would have done it had it not been that any row on shore would have stopped the leave of the rest of the boys on board. Again the niggers were dragged unwillingly back to the car, and again it started at a snail's pace. The joke of the thing was, that not one of the troopers was in a hurry;

all they wanted was to hear the wind whistle past their ears, and to have the excitement of nearly running into the other trolleys that were standing at a junction. At this point a grand idea struck one of them. "Let us give those niggers a shilling and tell them to bang into the first car they come to." This was carried with acclamation. The blacks were duly consulted. "Were they agreeable?" "What! a shilling?" They would be ashamed to say all they would do for a shilling. So off our adventurers started on their exciting ride. Just as they were nearing the collision, a man in civilian clothes jumped aboard. He was rather coldly received. After gazing at him for some time with a stony glare, one of the fellows asked, "Where are you bound for?" "Going to my office," the stranger

replied. "This is a private conveyance." The look of dismay on the would-be collision-merchants' faces was a treat to see. Of course they all apologised most humbly, and commenced to make their exit, when the proprietor, turning to one of them, said, "I hear by your voice you're a Scotchman." "I am," was the reply. "I come from the West Coast." "So dae I," the owner replied, breaking into the Doric. "And being a brither Scot, ye can ride about in this machine a' day if ye hae a mind tae." The invitation was thankfully accepted; and one trooper was so overjoyed that he hurled at his companions an epigram to the effect that "It's better to be a Scotchman in a strange land than a Freemason."

CHAPTER II.

MORE ABOUT BEIRA.

ANOTHER feature of Beira is the mud on the beach — Mud spelt with a big M. This mud, if it touches you, clings much closer than a brother, even when he is trying to borrow something; much closer than the sisters—they all told me they were sisters—who were clinging to the fellows when leaving Southampton. Being an innocent youth, and never having the necessary cash to run a sweetheart, I perforce, through want of knowledge, had to believe their tale. A fast youth who

was once a shining light in the village Sunday school, when he heard these old tales, remarked, like the old Scotsman of forgotten lore, "I hae ma doots." This mud, like the smell, once it gets on one's clothes, establishes a very close relationship.

One of our men, in jumping into a dingy from a jetty, either imagined he was an angel with wings or the champion long distance jumper of the earth—in any case his imagination carried him beyond his ability, and he didn't jump far enough, with the dire result that he landed short, and fell into the mud. Now, it is bad enough when one simply puts his foot into this mud, but when he flings himself bodily into it the effect is tragic. After he got the deposit out of his eyes and ears, and, I was going to say, nose—he

may have got the mud out of his nose, but to his dying day he'll never get the smell—he advanced, in the old school-boy fashion, with an open knife for some of us to scrape him. After a great deal of what seemed unnecessary hesitation on his comrades' part, one of them volunteered to do the job. Since then, I have seen men volunteer to take dispatches through the Boer lines, but never have I seen them with the look of resigned martyrdom that was depicted on that chap's face. On going up to the victim, the scraper asked him if he had hurt his neck, as he was holding his head very high. The unfortunate fellow said it was the collar of his tunic that was too tight ; but I have grave reasons to believe that he was telling a falsehood. The scraping process went on for a while in silence (the

scraper in the meantime holding his nose). At last he said, "I can't stand it any longer; I must have a smoke. Who's the next volunteer?" Nobody else would, and with one accord we turned and ran, and left the poor fellow to his fate. What that ultimately was, I didn't pry into; but I expect they would turn the hose on him before he was allowed to put both his feet on the deck. After weary waiting, we left Beira. The British have done many silly things during this war, but that was one of the wise things this arm of the great British army did—leave Beira. Wait a bit; I'm in too big a hurry. We did not leave it at once. We went away with only part of the train. We came back again. Gloom settled deep down in our hearts. We felt that we were stuck here for life. We were

backed into the alleged station to pick up the runaway trucks, but not backed in the gentle manner home. The first intimation that we had reached the unruly trucks was given by the buffer appearing through the rear of the truck I was in. We had been looking and longing for some excitement, and now we got it. The engine-driver appeared to be a bit of a sportsman, and we were likely before long to get all the excitement we wanted. I have often heard people of wide travel say, "See Naples and die." My opinion about Beira is, "See Beira, and if you don't die, you'll get killed."

The engine-drivers and guards on the Beira railway are thorough sportsmen. I had no regrets at leaving Beira. Strange as it may seem to some people, the feelings I had were of joy and gladness. We sat

down on the railway trucks, and prepared for the fast approaching night, making ourselves as comfortable as we could under the trying circumstances.

Tired as I was, I could not help looking at and admiring the fast setting sun, which filled me with awe, and set me wondering about the great Beyond. There it was —sinking deeper and deeper, till all at once it disappeared, leaving the earth in darkness. How sudden! How grand! Thoughts of home,—thoughts of the past,—thoughts of the future,—thoughts of sadness, chased each other through my brain. The trees seemed to attain an eerie height and breadth in the gloom. I unconsciously pulled my blanket higher over my head, and was soon fast asleep—knowing nothing!—caring nothing!

CHAPTER III.

TWENTY-THREE MILE PEG.

“MORNING!” “Good-morning all! How far have we gone? What did you say?” From the confused replies I gathered ten miles, and naturally concluded that this meant ten miles per minute. I thought this was decidedly good going, and the sooner these fast trains were started in Britain the better. “Ten miles all the length we have come!” explained one man. “Now, I admitted before that I was a fairly soft man and ready to believe a great deal, but you fellows are laying

it on just a bit too thick," I replied. They assured me they were in earnest ; ten miles was all we had done. We could have walked on our hands and knees quicker. The playful trucks had kept coming off all night and the sporting engine-driver had been kept busy coupling them at short intervals on our journey. After the night's experience we all agreed that this was a splendid railway by which to travel. No fear of a collision through over-running the points because of our great speed. This itself was reassuring. Having sat watching our locomotive snorting up to what we thought was a dangerous rate of speed, we felt the brake being put on, and the trucks banging together as if being suddenly stopped. This stopping system was very effective, I admit, but I question if it would have found much favour on

some of the British railways. What were we stopping for? We were coaling up, or rather wooding up, if I may coin the expression. This wooding up business reminded me of an experience I once had while yachting on the river Clyde, when I had to stoop so low as to steal a bag of coals. Wooding up! If the niggers ever build universities in this part of the globe I would suggest that they give a degree for wood stoking, as it is a science.

Five or six blacks stand on the top of the tender, while about ten stand below and throw up to, or I should say rather at, the men on the tender, chunks of wood. The men to whom I would give a degree are the men on top, who display great agility and science in keeping the wood from striking their toes. We sat and

watched them at this game for a while, but we could no longer sit, like King James on Flodden Field, inactive in our trucks. So some of the more energetic men got out and gave a hand, while others thought they would like to explore the jungle which stretched on both sides of the line, and if possible shoot a lion or two. The result was, when the train started there was a long tail of men in khaki, bawling and shouting for the driver to wait for them. The humorist of the foot-plate had stolen a march on his passengers this time, starting fairly punctual, and completely upsetting the lion-hunting expeditions of the energetic zoologists. After a great many stops we at last reached what was to be our first camp in Portuguese East Africa, viz., Twenty-three Mile Peg—the second step on the journey to Marandella's. The first

look of our stopping-place wasn't cheering. In fact, it was gloom. Just beside the rails there were the remains of a few banana trees, which some trader, arboricultural and imaginative, had planted ; but he, through the excitement of a life in the jungle and fastness of the passing trains, had lost his nerve and sought pastures new. Behind these withered and depressed trees, there were two or three Kaffir huts, which I hope and trust had seen better days. Two or three hundred yards further on was the ground for our camp. It was practically a clearing in the forest. On the left a clear little stream wimpled merrily. It brought thoughts of the homeland. The site of the camp and the beauty of the foliage and under-growth all around us were magnificent. The stream near by was a blessing, as in some of the deeper

pools we had room enough for a fairly decent swim ; and much shouting and good fun went on round these pools. The peacefulness of our little camp was soon to be broken in upon. Fever started ; then in its train followed dysentery. We were not allowed to roam at will through the dense jungle. The orders were that no man was to leave camp, and wise orders they were ; but some of the more restless spirits—men who, if there is a certain order, will go against it even though it is only for the somewhat uncertain pleasure of getting into a row—thought they would go on an exploring expedition. It nearly ended in disaster. One night they decided to creep out past the sentries into the forest. It so happened that some of the officers had made up their minds to go lion hunting that night. The troopers

were carefully stalking a snake they had discovered when bang! bang! went a gun. The officers in the dark had mistaken them for lions or hyenas! The troopers were in a mess ; if they stood up and showed themselves they would get punished, and if they waited where they were they ran a great chance of being shot. What were they to do? Run for it ; and run they did with the bullets whizzing past their ears nearly the whole way up to camp, which they at last reached in safety. The officers are still under the impression they had a lion hunt that night. We had now been about a fortnight in this camp and no signs of us shifting. The hospital—which was by no means complete—was becoming fuller every day, and the men were getting disheartened. At last, to their relief, one of the squadrons was ordered to get ready

for moving. Of this squadron I happened to be a member, and it is principally of its wanderings I shall speak. There was joy in our hearts and sympathy too for the poor fellows we were leaving behind, whom we tried to cheer up by telling them that they wouldn't be long after us. After much bad language we got on board the train, where we were told that in all probability we were to be part of the relief force for Mafeking. The announcement brought us pride, and our spirits were correspondingly high. Our trucks this time had iron shades, and were much better than open ones, as they kept off the scorching sun. At sundown we reached a place called Fontesvilla. There we stopped to take in wood and water. While we were at this job a bilious-looking Portugee came

and looked at us in surprise. Whether it was that he had never seen so many men, or whether it was our healthy appearance compared to his own, I couldn't tell, but at anyrate he stared with open mouth all the time we were there. I have since heard that Fontesville has the highest death-rate of whites in Africa, the West Coast included, the death-rate being something like 80 per cent. per annum. I am not surprised at it; the very place suggests death. The evil-smelling Pungwe at your feet has no life. Over beyond, on the right, are the graves of the men who built the bridge across the river. The birds that rise at one's approach don't fly up in the startled way an ordinary bird rises. They fly sluggishly. They don't seem to have the usual strength that a bird should have. They only rise

and fly a few feet, come down again and brood after their remarkable exertion. The niggers here are even lazier than their brethren at Beira, and that says a lot. On looking at the fever-stricken Portugee one could almost imagine one saw the Angel of Death sitting on his shoulders.

We were all pleased when the train steamed out of this hole. We had now got clear of the jungle and were out on the open veldt. The first sight of the veldt fills one with awe and wonder. There, stretching before, behind, and all around, is a perfect sea of land. The sun was setting, darkness would be with us shortly, and the eerie stillness was occasionally broken by the yelp of the jackal.

When we awoke in the morning we found our train going at a terrible speed,

—so fast, indeed, that we couldn't keep up with it running. Something must be wrong. We must speak to the engine-driver; he must be more careful. We had actually to hold on our hats. We soon discovered the reason: we were going down a slight incline. While rushing down we had breakfast. During one of the many stoppages the cook of the squadron ran along and got a kettle full of hot water from the engine, and into this he emptied about a handful of tea. He allowed it to settle in the bottom and then shared it out. The method of division was rather primitive. Each man dipped his billy-can into the kettle, and by the time the last man got his tea it had a fine savory taste of mud. However, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good. We got the outside of our 'billies'

cleaned in dipping into the kettle. Then we opened the big six pound tin of corned beef and passed it round. There wasn't much of a rush on this, as it had a great tendency to make one thirsty ; and as we knew we would be thirsty enough before night, the wiser and less hungry left it alone. With these delicacies we ate our hard biscuits. Needless to say, during most of these meals there was strict silence, as it took all the energy of the muscles of the jaw to crush the biscuit. After our repast we took out our pipes, filling them out of our now fastly diminishing stock of tobacco, and gazed complacently over the top of the truck at the passing scenery. At this time a swarm of locusts passed over the train, completely shutting out the sun. The atmosphere appeared to have that grey tint that tells at home of an

approaching snowstorm. The insects, which were termed elongated grasshoppers by one man, amused us for a time, but we soon grew tired of the procession. The fellows began to get restless, and suggested various forms of amusement. Nap? No; there was no use playing nap, as very few of us had any money. Boxing? No; there was no room, and besides it was too hot for such violent exercise. Just then the train stopped beside some niggers working on the line. We tried on them several Kaffir phrases which we had learned since arriving, but they couldn't understand us. We interspersed conversational efforts with bits of biscuits and things. We sometimes threw a half-full tin of 'Bully' among them, and eagerly watched the scramble for it. A sweepstake would have been started as to which nigger

would get it, only the absence of money, as I said before, prevented this. Some chaps fancied a big black fellow, with a brawny arm and white teeth, and others one with a mouth like a carpet-bag, but each of us had a favourite. This began to pall, and when the train started we resumed our seats, feeling like birds in a cage and very discontented. The sun had set, but on the left front we could see the flicker of a distant flame, which sent needles of light into the darkness. What was it? It must be a habitation of some sort. We approached nearer. It is a habitation, and in the dim light emitted from two dirty oil lamps we can see written on a board, Bamboo Creek. The order comes for us to detrain here. We are not going to Mafeking. We have to camp here. The rage and disappoint-

ment, the strange oaths, everybody in a mix. Everybody out of temper. Everyone swearing. It was an awful night, and to make it more dismal the rain started. Each one who passed was dragging kit, bags, rifles, haversacks, and great-coats, and tripping over the undergrowth. Men with whom one had been on the best of terms in the earlier part of the day, if accidentally knocked, would immediately turn round with a scowl and aggressively ask, "Why the devil can't you watch your feet, ye blethering idiot?"

There was a pool of green stagnant water right on the road between us and our camping ground which everyone had to jump. In the dark it was impossible to tell how far to spring, and nearly everyone fell short and splashed themselves right up to the eyes with horrid, thick,

muddy water. Then followed the usual bad language. I am afraid if the recording angel made up her mind to put down all she heard that night against each single trooper she would require two or three shorthand assistants. However, I am sure if she understood the circumstances, the darkness, the rain, the holes, the low bushes, the mire, the heaps of unlaid rails, together with the disappointment of not going to Mafeking, she, out of her goodness of heart, wouldn't write it down.

We reached our ground and lay down just as we were, without looking on what kind of stuff we were lying. There were plenty of other men near us. We could hear them; but who they were or where they were from, we didn't know and were too tired to care. Just as we fell asleep and had forgotten our

troubles we were rudely awakened and asked if "we would like some coffee." Would we like coffee? We would like anything so long as it was drinkable. We got coffee, one of the most refreshing cups of coffee I've ever tasted, even although it wasn't served up in clean cups. After this we felt much happier, and all we asked was to be let alone, which we were, and I for one enjoyed the soundest sleep I had had since I left Britain.

CHAPTER IV.

BAMBOO CREEK.

IN the morning we had time to look round and see what kind of a place we had been dumped down in. Words cannot describe the lost feeling I had when I had surveyed Bamboo Creek. Bamboo Creek, forsooth! Where are the bamboos? I think whoever had named this place must have been a cynic, and an untruthful cynic at that, and named it thus because it was about the only place in East Africa that had no bamboos. This was my first impression, but after

a good search I found about three near the station, or rather drinking saloon.

The camp was placed inside a wire fence on ground that resembled very closely coal dust. The result was that everything one ate tasted of decayed vegetation. On looking round I found that some of the New Zealanders had arrived here before us. They were big, finely-built fellows—men every one of them. If these are the men the Colonies produce, and they stand by us always, then Britain need never fear. “Well, what do you think of this place?” I inquired, advancing towards a trooper in the New Zealand mounted rifles. I will not put down his answer here, as these men from the Colonies have a strange way of expressing themselves; but I gathered from his remarks, profane and

otherwise, that the place did not meet with his approval.

We had plenty of work to do here, taking horses out of up-going trains, watering and feeding them, then entraining them again. Many a hard knock and many a crushed foot was received in this operation. The New Zealanders' horses were kept in a compound, fenced in with barbed wire. These horses had to be taken down to water, at a pool about a mile off, two or three times a day. We had to ride one horse, and lead two or three. Of course we had really nothing to do with these horses, as they belonged to the New Zealanders, but our fellows generally offered to go down to water with them. What exciting races we had, and the laughter when a man came off! What hard, hard

knocks some of our fellows got! But the hard knocks and jeers were taken with the usual stoicism of a Britisher. There was a bad horse in the compound that even very few of the New Zealanders could manage. A trooper in ours one day, much to the surprise of everyone, volunteered to ride it, and bare backed too. "What!" we said, "do you mean to say that you fancy yourself to be a better rider than some of these New Zealanders?" "No," he replied, "but I'm not afraid to try."

We all got round the horse, held it by the head till he got mounted, and put a rope through its mouth for him to hold. When we saw he was fairly seated, we darted away, shouting and gesticulating, and throwing pieces of sticks, etc. Everything was done, in fact, to try to

get the horse to throw him; but, no! he stuck on like a leech. The horse jumped, it pranced, it bucked, but all to no purpose. Our hero was fairly surprising us, and our jeering turned to cheering. "Well done!" we shouted. "Well done, the rough rider!" But just then, with a sudden spring and a leap, the horse went away at full gallop round the compound. We knew if it galloped fair he could easily stick on. Horse and rider went round and round, both in a fair state of excitement, amidst our cries of "Hang on!" and "Well done, chum!" from the New Zealanders, when all at once the horse, as a supreme effort, made straight for the high barbed wire railings. "Get off!" some shouted. "No, don't; stick on; it'll stop before it comes to them." The rider evidently thought it had

no intention of stopping before the railing, so threw himself off, and in falling must have been caught by the horse's hind legs. When we saw him come off, we ran up to where he was lying, and found him unconscious. We thought he had been killed. One ran for water, one went for stimulants and the doctor. In the meantime those who were left picked him up tenderly, very tenderly, and carried him to his tent, where the doctor examined him, and to our relief found only slight injuries to one of his arms.

He was called the rough rider afterwards, but not with a sneer. We appreciated his pluck.

Fever and dysentery: these were the words one heard oftenest. So-and-so down with fever; or have you heard that So-and-so is very bad with dysentery? In my

tent we had eleven, and at no time did these eleven sleep here after the first night. Sometimes four would be carried off to the hospital, such as it was, at a time. Another night two, and so on. Some of them came back and slept among us rather than sleep in the hospital tent. Fortunately I escaped all disease, and was in excellent health, for which I was thankful. I was pleased to be able to move about and help those who couldn't.

Some nights I got no sleep at all attending to the fellows in my tent with wet sponges, quinine, etc. This went on for days and no sign of us being shifted, till at last one morning we knew instinctively that something was wrong. The word came round that one of the fellows in another company had died through the night : our

first death. What a feeling it is, alone on a vast waste—a comrade had died without complaint and without murmur! Did his companions feel it? Yes; we had lost one of our little band. We hadn't got over the shock when word of another death came. In the loneliness of the night this other poor chap got up out of the hospital tent, and walked over to his own, among his companions.

Immediately they saw him, they lit the little end of the candle, and told stories to try and cheer him up. In the midst of one of the stories his head dropped on the arm of his friend, who had been supporting him; his spirit passed away. Over the sorrow and tears in that tent I will draw a veil. When the news came of the second death, we looked at each other with a look that plainly said, "Who

next?" We buried them side by side in the little cemetery across the railway line. Our bugles played the "last post"; and over their graves our rifles rang out three volleys. How sad we were! What a feeling the "last post" gives one. "Last post!" "Last post!"

We made two little crosses out of some old boxes, and carved on them our comrades' names, somewhat rudely perhaps, but with feelings of keen sorrow. Heroes both of them, and honoured as such by their comrades. Something must be done now. Our officers got a train together somehow for the sick, to take them up to the healthier climate of Umtali. In this train my own chum went up, as he was bad with malaria; forty in a truck, together with their rifles and kit. It was very rough on them, but such are the exigencies of

campaigning. They reached Umtali all right, for which place we got word in a day or two afterwards to stand in readiness, as we might get a train at any moment. At six o'clock one morning we got orders to get everything down to the station, as we were likely to leave that afternoon. After two hours hard work loading up the train, everything was in readiness and we all got seated in the trucks, but there was no engine. We waited one hour, we waited two, and no signs. At eleven p.m., a locomotive put in an appearance. We chaffed the driver unmercifully, asking him why he had come so early, as we weren't in a hurry, really!

He was a cool hand, and amid our remarks trekked calmly away to the canteen to assimilate some liquor.

CHAPTER V.

THE COLLISION.

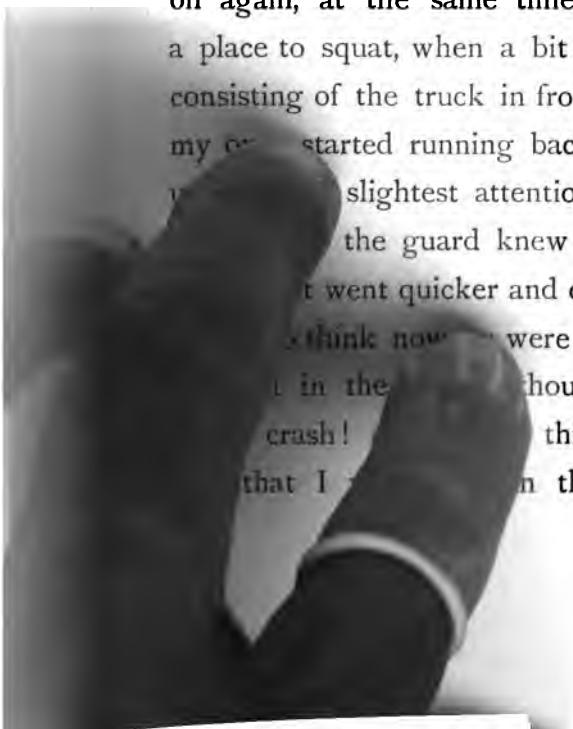
AT twelve p.m., the engine-drivers and guards came out, or rather rolled out of the drinking saloon, and finished their conversation standing by one of the engines. Our officers tried all their persuasive powers to at least make them get aboard and get steam up ; but, no ! the chin wagging still went on. At last, much to our astonishment, the conference had broken up, and the debaters started to get on to their respective engines. We gave them a cheer. We cheered them too soon,

however ; something had gone wrong with the rear truck, the one which I occupied, or rather had been squeezed into. There were other thirty-nine men and baggage besides myself jammed in this receptacle. Needless to say there was nobody lolling at full length. In the excitement of entraining my pugaree had come off my head. I was standing on a box busy rolling this on again, at the same time looking for a place to squat, when a bit of the train, consisting of the truck in front of us and my own, started running back. None of us paid the slightest attention to this, as we thought the guard knew what he was doing. It went quicker and quicker. We began to think now we were surely going too fast in the dark without an engine, when crash ! The next thing I knew was that I was lying on the floor with

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At twelve p.m., the engine-drivers and guards came out, or rather rolled out of the drinking saloon, and finished their conversation standing by one of the engines. Our officers tried all their persuasive powers to at least make them get aboard and get steam up; but, no! the chipping still went on. At last, however, with a shout of astonishment, the drivers got aboard, and the drivers and their respective engineers were soon in full steam.



however ; something had gone wrong with the rear truck, the one which I occupied, or rather had been squeezed into. There were other thirty-nine men and baggage besides myself jammed in this receptacle. Needless to say there was nobody lolling at full length. In the excitement of entraining my pugaree had come off my head. I was standing on a box busy rolling this on again, at the same time looking for a place to squat, when a bit of the train, consisting of the truck in front of us and my car started running back. None of us paid the slightest attention to this, as the guard knew what he was about. It went quicker and quicker. We think now we were surely going to smash in the rear without an engine, crash ! The last thing I knew that I fell on the floor with

rifles, bandoliers, bayonets, and about ten men on the top of me.

The confusion that ensued was indescribable. From the depths of the débris could be heard the most pitiable cries : "O my leg!" "O my arm! For heaven's sake look sharp and get me out of this. All the damned rifles are on the top of me, and my arm is jammed in between two boxes."

After a quarter of an hour's hard work the place was cleared and the last man helped out. We found that two were unconscious, and three or four others had been badly injured about the arms and legs. How a number of us weren't killed I don't understand, as we had gone slap into a locomotive that was standing down the line. So great had been our impact, that the funnel and buffers, and, in fact,

all the front of the engine had been displaced. As for our truck, it was practically a wreck ; only half of it was standing, and that about a foot off the rails. All the rest of the squadron ran down asking breathlessly, "What's wrong ? Anybody killed?" "Nobody killed, thank God." "You had better ask the guard ; he knows more about the cause of the accident than we do."

We stood undecided now what to do. Chuck up the whole game and desert, then make our way to the coast?

"Come, lads, don't get downhearted ; get off your tunics and let's get the baggage removed into another train," shouted an officer, at the same time stripping off his coat. "We'll get out of this ungodly hole, even if we have

to drive the engines ourselves." It was a good example; and after two hours' sweating work, we got the baggage removed into another train. We jumped in and flung ourselves down dead beat. This train could go to hell if it liked. The next morning, at sunrise, we saw the top of the little engine-shed about ten miles behind. "Farewell, Bamboo Creek, we have got away from you at last." But we had also a thought for the comrades sleeping in the modest graveyard, far from the homeland.

If in after years a Britisher comes to the fenced-off clearing among the trees, he may hear the story of how his fellow-countrymen came; how they died, not in the lust of battle but from disease; and he, touched by the patriots' death, may renew our memorials to dead chums.

CHAPTER VI.

UMTALI.

If you have ever had a ride on a switch-back railway, you have experienced the same feelings as we did on the Beira railway between Bamboo Creek and Umtali. The only redeeming feature of the railway is the scenery. It is superb.

At a point near Mandegas we got the somewhat doubtful assistance of another engine, which was tacked on behind. Whether it was that the engine-drivers weren't on the best of terms with each

other, or that the engines had been built in rival yards, I can't say ; but the fact remained, we made no better progress with two than one. I admit that some of the hills were extremely steep and long ; but then we had always the advantage of a big hill behind, which the engine-drivers utilised to the best of their power. Even with these natural aids it sometimes took us six tries before we reached the top. The mode of procedure was this : Once the train got to the top of a hill, it was stopped till there was enough steam in the boilers to carry it up the next. We had now a pretty steep gradient to descend, which we did at lightning speed with the steam shut off. When we got to the foot again, on went the steam. With the impetus of the descent and the steam combined, we generally, on the

first trial, reached about three-quarters of the height. The train then slowly but surely stopped. Now ensued a rushing of guards and engine-drivers putting pins in the wheels in case the train should run back. Needless to say, we were in as great a state of suspense as the engine-drivers to see if we could struggle up to the top. "We're stuck! No, we're still going! We're stopped now for certain." No; we move on another foot or so, then stop dead. The willing engines try again and again, but the wheels only skid on the metals. Pins are put in the wheels again, till there is enough steam to manage the brake. We get up steam, come down the hill we have just struggled up, and half up the one behind. Try it again. Stuck again! Once more the same programme is gone through, until,

as I mentioned previously, it is very often the sixth time before we stand triumphant on the crest of the hill. After many ups and downs, speaking both metaphorically and literally, we reached Mandegas. Here we hooked on two or three trucks filled with New Zealanders. They helped to relieve the monotony of the rest of the journey. There was one big fellow amongst them who, if the train happened to stop near a Kaffir hut, was out prying into everything. At one of these huts he startled a young pig. He ran after it with the energy of a man who sees the possibility of a satisfying dinner looming in the near future. Another man jumped out of the train to help him; so did another, then another, till there must have been thirty New Zealanders and Sharpshooters running, sweating and

shouting ; but, try as they could, that wily porker continued to elude them. The men who remained in the train took the pig's part, and encouraged it with shouts of "Well done, Porky!" This was getting too much. The big New Zealander called all his men together and held a council of war. They would never secure the animal by chasing it indiscriminately ; they must out-flank it. They encircled the pig and sent out scouts from four points. The main body of the column closed in and advanced. The enemy was chased right to the New Zealander, who thought he had it. With a self-satisfied smile, he stooped to catch the game by the ears. It jumped through his legs into the long grass, and escaped amidst the derisive laughter from the train. The Antipodean retreated to the

train crestfallen with his men, who re-seated themselves in silence. The next place we reached was called Chimoio, which is a pretty place with palm trees in profusion at the station. Here a drunk Frenchman approached the train, and in a loud voice either encouraged or denounced us, we didn't know which. One fellow who was sitting swinging his feet over the side of the truck gave him the benefit of the doubt, gently planting his foot on his chest, and laid him among a heap of rails, hand-barrows, and picks which were lying near by. Whatever Monsieur's opinions were, he didn't give mouth to them again; he simply picked himself up and slunk humbly into the solitude of the hills.

From Chimoio we proceeded on our way through grand scenery. So clear

was the air, that the hills and valleys seemed to stand out as if there was a strong light behind them. Our next stop was a little mining village among the hills. The name was unpronounceable as it is unspellable. We had an interesting conversation at this place with some of the Portuguese soldiers who were standing by. They couldn't speak English and none of us could speak their language, so all we did was to smile at each other and nod our heads genially. I think they, unlike their brothers in arms at Beira, wanted to be friendly with us. At any-rate one of them kindly gave me a cigarette, for which I thanked him in all the languages I thought I knew, including Gaelic. I hope he understood.

We journeyed on. We came to a river,

on the one side of which was a flag pole with a maxim at the foot of it, and the Portuguese flag hanging limply at the top. On the other side was another flag pole which had also a maxim at the foot, —not, however, with the Portuguese flag at the top, but the grand old Union Jack.

In our imagination it seemed to defy all laws of gravity and atmospheric conditions, and gave us a welcome by fluttering backwards and forwards. "Now, three good, solid English cheers for the old flag, boys," some one shouted out. "Hip! hip! hurrah!" Only those who have been going through foreign ground on what I might call sufferance know what it is to feel that they are at last standing under the protection and defiance of the old flag. "Look at it," some one said

after we had passed. "It is still giving us a welcome. Let's give it another cheer." "Hip! hip! hurrah!" Although it was only a piece of silk, we half believed it understood and was pleased. We now started to get our things collected together as we were nearing Umtali. More splendid scenery, and we reached this place Umtali. It was pitch dark. The poor fellows who had turned sick with fever and dysentery on the road up were taken out of the train first and laid in a little waiting-room at the station amid much confusion in the dark. Nobody had any idea where our camp was to be pitched. So we were taken to an empty corrugated iron store, where we were allowed to stay for the night. After I had taken all my belongings to the store, I was sent for water for the coffee. I was busy searching for this

water in the dark, falling, stumbling, and swearing, when a voice behind me asked, "What are you looking for, mate?" "Water," I replied, looking up at the person who had addressed me.

He was one of the Canadians who had come up the night before. He was just in the middle of directing me to the spring, when a voice with a foreign accent at the side of us was heard to mutter, "More of these damned English." The Canadian, without any warning, turned round and, with terrific force, let the interfering stranger have two hits straight from the shoulder. I don't know when the smitten one regained consciousness, as, after making the Canadian promise not to touch him again—I thought he had had enough—I went in quest of water.

Water was got, brought into the store,

and coffee was made. The men's spirits rose accordingly. One fellow in a sad voice sat in a corner singing "Mid pleasures and palaces there's no place like home." After throwing various articles at him he was silenced. Another man went wandering round trying to find out what had been sold in the store. He is a universal type, never tired; never wanting to go to sleep. After a great deal of coaxing and persuasion we at last got him to lie down. Then we all got to sleep, dreaming of collisions, tigers and lions, Canadians, Bushmen, Boers and Kaffirs. My own dream that night was that I had been served out with a silk hat to wear with my khaki, and all that I could do or say was of no avail: I had to wear that tile. The worst of it was that it was far too small for me, and I had

to keep it on with a bit of field-dressing tied right round my head. And as I dreamt, I heard the laughing satire of my comrades, who ultimately knocked the irritating chapeau down over my ears. The bash awoke me, and I discovered that my head was reposing in a War Department pail—a capacious, but uncomfortable night-cap.

CHAPTER VII.

UMTALI—THE CAMP.

THE next morning we loaded our kits on bullock waggons, and it took two weary hours for these waggons to reach the camping ground, a distance of about a mile and a half. The way lay all up hill, and it was a bad road. We had good fun lending a hand on the waggon wheels. What struck me most was that the niggers seemed to pick the worst bit of the road, with the result that boxes and baggages kept continually coming off. However, after many cries of “Get on with these

oxen," and such like, we arrived at the ground and dumped down our cargo. Our camp was fairly high up and moderately healthy; only the fever, carried from the camps lower down, was beginning to break out in the men. One day I met a man staggering over to the hospital tent like one who was intoxicated. "Hallo! old man! what's wrong?" I inquired. "I think I've got sunstroke. My head's going round like a bally merry-go-round," he answered. This is a good simile, as I can testify, for I have since had an attack. It was here that my old chum whom I had carefully put in the sick train at Bamboo Creek died. I now felt quite alone. All we had had we had shared together—blankets, tobacco, and food. When any fellow loses his most intimate friend like that he is chief mourner, which, besides

other duties, includes the sad task of putting the remains in the coffin. After this was done I helped to lift the coffin on to the artillery waggon drawn by oxen. The fellows of his tent formed up round the waggon and held the Union Jack which is thrown across it. The rest of the squadron formed up behind and with measured step and slow the cortège moved off towards the grave. The men reversed their arms, and an English clergyman stood at the grave and conducted the burial service. When the service was over we stepped forward, eight of us, and gently, gently lowered him down. Again the familiar three volleys and the sad "Last Post" rang out. Another of the little band gone. With heavy hearts and bowed heads we marched back to camp. We lost, between our battalion and the Irish

Yeomanry who were lying beside us, about twenty men here. We got hardened ; we didn't care whose turn it was next, even if it were our own.

At this camp we did a lot of marching and scouting, which, besides giving us an idea how to fight the Boers when we met them, kept us in good health. There was one thing to be thankful for here ; we could go down into the town, and if we had sufficient money, buy a good dinner and have a game of billiards. Umtali is a quiet little township lying principally on a little hill surrounded by higher ones. We went marches up one of these hills by a pass that led us along a valley called "Hell's Divide." This was a path between two mountains not in the valley, but a good way up on one side of one of the mountains. The high peaks of the

mountains could be seen towering overhead on looking up, and on looking down one saw what seemed to be a bottomless chasm overhung with spreading trees of wonderful colour. We remained at this camp for about a fortnight, then we got orders to move on to Marandella's. It took us the greater part of three days to reach this place. The scenery was uninteresting on the whole, great stretches of flat country broken here and there by hills suddenly rising out of the ground. One interesting thing we passed on this journey was a rocking stone which must have weighed at least five hundred tons. Finely balanced on another of smaller dimensions one would have thought that the least push would have knocked it over. We reached Marandella's in the morning. More hard work detraining. To say we

marched up to our ground wouldn't just be correct—we crawled up, as our legs were cramped with the awkward way we had been sitting in the trucks. When we arrived we found the waggons there before us, from which we took the tents and at once got them erected. Then we built our horse lines. In a day or two we got our horses ; then the fun began. One would have thought that no one had been allowed to join our squadron unless they had one or two black eyes, cut faces, broken noses and limps—injuries which had been done by the frolicsome equine.

I was served out with a horse which I knew would not let me mount. I would have been taken for an imbecile if I had gone to the captain and said, "Please, sir, this horse won't stand till I get mounted."

I had to do my best with the brute. The result was, when we were on parade and the order "Prepare to mount" was given, I put my left foot in the stirrup iron, then the next order "Mount." I made a spring, but before I got my right leg thrown across the saddle my horse was off—bolted. I made a bold bid for the saddle, but I came off. My left foot still stuck in the iron, and I was carried along about fifty yards with my head on the ground. Bump—bump—bump—bump—bump! Just as I was wondering when the death blow would come I felt myself lying stationary. I had only strength enough left to look up and see which direction my horse, had taken and lie down again. The feeling seemed to strike my dazed brain that if I lay here I would lose my horse, and I didn't want

that. I got up and staggered after it. What was that catching my foot and nearly tripping me as I walked? I looked down, and saw that my foot was still through the iron, with the leather still attached. My stirrup leather had broken. That's what saved my life. I looked at the leather, and was thankful that it had given way.

I still staggered on and came on one of the Victorians holding my wayward steed. "Is this your horse, chum?" he asked. "It is," I replied. "How did it throw you?" I explained the circumstances. "Hold that billy-can," he said, "and I will try it." He shifted the one remaining stirrup to the near side. He put his foot in it and made a spring with the same dire result—thrown on his head. We took some bits of paper off a

bully-tin which was lying near and pasted it on our cuts. Then, after wishing each other sorrowfully Good-bye, we parted, and I led my horse to my own lines. The horse was taken from me, as it was of no use for fighting against Boers. While we lay at Marandella's, word was brought in that the niggers were very restless and were likely to attack us. The outposts were doubled. All the men had to lie to arms. It is a very peculiar feeling to be on outpost duty on an occasion like this. As it happened, my post was the farthest away from the main body that night. Standing with rifle in hand on the pitch black veldt, wild thoughts chase one another madly through one's mind. Home thoughts first, then your own danger, which sends an eerie thrill through you. The bush rustles. It puts

you on the *qui vive*. "Can it be a nigger crawling up to put a knife into me?" I asked myself in trepidation. I feel if my bayonet is on securely. I listen intently. I peer into the darkness ; hear nothing, see nothing. If it chanced to be a nigger coming to strike, and I can see him, I haven't much doubt as to the result, but it is the horrible uncertainty of a possible enemy hidden in the waving veldt that makes one feel so queer. And so the two hours' duty drags on, until you are back into the guard tent. A humorous incident happened one of these nights. When we were out on outpost, the different posts had to shout that "All's well" every half hour, thus—"No. 1, and all's well"; "No. 2, and all's well"; "No. 3, and all's well"; and so on. There were generally about eight posts, and one could hear all the numbers

shouted till it came back to No. 1 again, who shouted "No. 1, and all's very well," laying a stress on the "very". I happened to be No. 3 this night. After hearing No. 2 shout, I took up the call "No. 3, and all's well." Then a stentorian voice from a tent far away down the lines bawled "No. 10 is in the very best of health, thank you." If this jokist had been caught, he would have been heavily punished. In the mornings we had mounted drill, which was enjoyable, except when one happened to be the centre of an extended line and the order was given to close in. "Careful there; can't you see you're jamming my legs?" "Here, watch my foot; do you want to break it?" "Get over a bit, can't you?" "Wait till this drill is finished, and, by heavens, I'll punch your head for you!"

"How the devil can I help it? Don't you see they are crushing me, and not so much of the punching of the head." Thus the morning was passed. All the bad thoughts and nasty remarks were forgotten immediately we got back to the horse lines, where we unsaddled and took our horses to water about three miles distant. We rode one and led three. Some of the horses weren't just made for bare-back riding, and they weren't as comfortable as a deck chair, but still we would sooner ride than walk, no matter how sore we were after it.

When we had a little time, we generally had a walk round the other lines. New Zealanders, Victorians, and bushmen were lying alongside of us. With these men we speedily fraternised. We wished to show our gratitude for the men turning

out in Britain's hour of need, but this they resented. They seemed to think that we should have known that they would fight for the old country, it didn't matter who the row was with.

When we had a concert on, we invited the Colonials. We always knew when they were arriving by their strange war cries. The New Zealander's war-cry is a peculiarly weird war chant of the Maories, ending up with an unearthly aboriginal shriek which I am sure would be sufficient to shift the Boers. The Queenslanders have a war-cry of a different order; it sounds like "Woollagabler; Woollagabler; ya, ya, ya."

CHAPTER VIII.

MARANDELLA'S.

THEY have very kindly feelings one to another, these sons of the mother country beyond the seas. These men have come from places where the roads are only tracks from one sheep run to another, in Colonial parlance, from "way back." They humped their billies or shouldered their swags, and made their way to an enlisting station, and there signified, by signing the attestation paper, their willingness and anxiety to fight shoulder to shoulder with the lads from the old

country. They may have had to ride or even tramp all the way to Sydney or Melbourne, or perhaps Dunedin, to do this. It didn't matter, they came. They left their partners to look after their sheep runs ; in some cases they tossed up with each other to see who should go to the war and who should stay behind. Those who remain may often be found reading a two months' old paper to find out if his old chum is behaving as a pard ought.

There was a canteen within easy distance of the camp. The storekeeper, whose prices were exorbitant, was not a favourite. I saw two of the bushmen getting a ham for nothing one day. These hams were hanging from the rafters inside the store. The two men walked in quietly and unassumingly and waited till

the shop was crowded. Then one tied his knife on to a stick and cut the string by which the ham was suspended, and the ham fell into the waiting arms of his chum. When it had been duly shoved up one of their tunics, they wished the storekeeper a cheery "Good day, and hoped he would keep busy." It was one of the smartest tricks I have seen, and we were all pleased, as the canteen keeper put himself out as an ultra "fly" man, and we were "tender feet" or "new chums." He wasn't up early enough, however, for the Australians. I won a bet of a sovereign from this same man over an argument we had about some trifling matter. My comrades were overjoyed at my winning, and came down to help me, if need be, to collect the bet, but their services weren't required as he paid over

cheerfully. It would have been cheaper for me if I had lost, because I had to stand them all sorts of things, which took away the sovereign I had won, and another one as well. Fifteen or sixteen of us often crowded into a tent and held a concert. These concerts were very enjoyable. At this camp, the vermin started to bother us. In my estimation this was about the worst hardship of the campaign. No matter what disinfectant we tried, it was all to no purpose, and the insects flourished like a green bay tree.

While strolling down the railway line one day I came on a hut which belonged to an Africander. Just as I was leaving, the owner came up and asked if I would join him in a cup of tea. On replying in the affirmative we both stooped down and entered the doorway. He called on one

of the niggers who was lying sleeping outside to get some tea ready. While waiting for tea I had some time to look round the interior. A bamboo bed was on one side; a rifle, two sporting guns, and a few valuable skins were hung on what I might call the gable end. On the wall opposite the bed was a piece of a broken mirror, and a revolver with a few assegais standing in the corner. It was a picturesque and romantic interior. During tea the conversation turned to shooting, and he consented to display his skill. He stuck a little cigarette photo on a tree about 100 yards distant, and shot at it. The bullet went clean through the centre three times out of four trials. That was with his rifle.

He loaded both barrels of his sporting gun, left it lying on a rock, threw up two

bottles in a slanting direction, picked up his gun and broke the bottles one after the other. It was marvellous shooting.

At this period one squadron of the 17th battalion was sent up to quell a rising of the natives near the Zambesi. This they did without much trouble. I think the blacks themselves saw that it was a most unequal contest, fighting men who had rifles and horses while they themselves only had assegais and leather shields. In any case they soon surrendered and apologised for giving so much trouble. After this the same squadron marched down to Fort Salisbury to be presented with the freedom of the city. To say they took the freedom of Salisbury would better express their demeanour in this town. The regret of those left behind

was that they weren't there with the others. Sports, concerts, and gymkhanas were given in honour of the troopers. We had plenty of hard work at Marandella's,—drills, stables, and preparing for the approaching march. Orders ultimately came for us to get ready for the next stage of our journey; and after much work we left Marandella's, bound for Victoria.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE MARCH.

IT was about the first of July when we set out on the march, which started at four o'clock p.m. We reached our resting place somewhere near nine o'clock the same evening; at anyrate the sun had long since gone down, and there was no moon. Each man carried a picketing peg and rope. When we arrived in camp we were numbered off thus, 1, 2, 3, 4, all down each troop. Number one collected the pegs and ropes, number two held the rifles, number three the

horses, while number four gave number one a hand to drive in the pegs and make fast the ropes. After everything was ready, each man came back, tied up his horse, and unsaddled. When he had unsaddled, he loosened it again, took it down to water, then brought it back, fixed it up again and fed it. This night and for many nights after, there was great confusion. One had always great difficulty in finding the spot where he had laid his saddle. At night we used our saddles as pillows; and often one would be rudely awakened by a gruff voice at his ear saying, "Here, shift! This is my saddle." "It isn't your saddle." "It is." "It isn't." "It is." "Oh, go to the devil!" A silence—then the voice from the saddle would be heard muttering, "Even if it is your saddle,

I'm not going to shift at this time of night." "Aren't you? We'll dashed soon see about that." Then in the bright moonlight might be seen two forms struggling, swearing, and sweating,—one time in among the horses, another time falling over their recumbent comrades. Then would be heard, in a sleepy voice, the man who had just been fallen over, asking what the devil these two had been playing at, and advising them, in no gentle voice, to go to the wide veldt and fight it out; but still the struggling continued till one was victorious. When it was all over, they generally sat and threw remarks at each other. "Eh, Cocky, and you thought you would pull me off the saddle, did you?" "Oh! it is all very well you speaking. You haven't had fever. Wait till you get it, and see

if you have any strength left,"—and such like remarks, till sleep gradually over-powered them, and the whole fight and argument would end up with, "Good night, Matey; I'm getting sleepy," from one of them, and "Good night, lad; I hope our struggle to-night won't bring back the fever. I didn't know that you were still suffering from the effects, or I should have given you the saddle at once. You can have it now if you wish." "No; thanks, I'm all right where I am." "Are you sure now?" "Yes." "Good night." "Good night." Then a man in the distance remarks, "Thank Heaven! That mutual admiration society has decided to shut up shop; now we can all get to sleep." Then in a tone which suggests that if another man says a word that night, he'll get

up and kill him, the cynic shouts out,
“Good night all.”

In the morning there was always a row. Reveille went at two o'clock, and if there was no moon we had to saddle up in the dark. We had to take our saddles, martingales, and bridles over and lay them down beside our horses, for if we didn't do that we were sure to lose something. Some fellow who couldn't find, say, his martingale, would just come and lift the one nearest him. A martingale wasn't so bad—one could do without it; but when it came to having a bridle stolen, it was a different story. The whole squadron had to wait till it was found, and all the time the loser was being called a careless fellow. It didn't matter how much one protested that the bridle had been stolen; the only consolation one got was,

"Why didn't you sneak another?" It practically meant that one had to do the serpent business and sleep with one eye open; but one eye wasn't half enough: one would have needed six or seven, and good ones at that.

We got on fairly well; only every now and then a waggon would break down, and we would have to wait till it was mended. Sometimes one of the waggons stuck at a spruit or some rough part of the road; then some of us dismounted and gave it a shove. This shoving business was a source of great merriment.

We all got on the wheels and all along the waggon, then shouted to the niggers, "Are you ready?" "Ya, Baas." Then amidst great cries of "Umba, umba, voetzak!" we got the waggon to move

an inch or two ; then the oxen stopped to have a rest. Again more shouting, more whip cracking, more “ Umba, umba, voetzak ! ” and the waggon was fairly started, and went on till it stuck once more. A waggon broke down or stuck every now and then, and I am afraid the men who were supposed to be pushing did more shouting than anything else.

The sun was very hot about noon, and some fellows went down with sun-stroke. Of course during all this time we had always some of the boys on the waggon suffering from fever or dysentery. They had a rough passage ; as, besides going over the roughest part of the road, the driver often led the oxen off the road over big clumps of stubby bushes. Nothing seemed to be considered an obstruction for these waggons. When

we marched at night, the advance guard had the worst of it. If the moon was up it was all right, but if not it was awful. We couldn't see the road, and we didn't know the moment a horse was going to put his foot in a hole and break his leg and our necks. Every now and then a horse fell, and the man was thrown on to the back of his head. I was riding on advance guard one night with another chap, when all of a sudden man and horse disappeared. I thought he had gone down to Hades straight away, and I also thought it was rather mean of him not to say good-bye first. After I had got over the first shock, I called out and asked if he had been hurt. "No, I'm not hurt; but for heaven's sake give me a drink of

water, and help me up with this horse. I never had such a fright in all my life," was the reply I got from the depths. After a great struggle, we got the horse up out of the hole, and after looking to see if it had been damaged in any way, and finding it hadn't, my comrade mounted again. It was a sort of landslip on the road he had fallen into, and without any exaggeration it was eight feet deep. How both he and his horse came out of it without a scratch will always remain a mystery. Of course, we passed the word back to beware of the hole. It was peculiar to hear away from the front rank every now and then, "Hole on the right—pass the word along," or "Hole on the left," or "Boulder right on the middle of the road," also, "Hole on the left; take the right and be careful,"

echoing far to the rear of the squadron. But, fortunately, there was no serious mishap at this part of the journey, and after a month's journey we struck Fort Charter.

CHAPTER X.

FORT CHARTER.

THE Union Jack, with a Maxim standing near the flag-pole, about two of the British South African police, a telegraph office, a few Kaffir huts, and, of course, the necessary store, constitutes Fort Charter. Down past what might be called the fort or township is a wide, open space, partly surrounded with high trees, and bordered by a gently running stream. I say gently running advisedly—to talk about a stream walking isn't poetical or romantic, and besides, walking wouldn't describe it. Crawling is

nearer the mark in some parts of this stream's existence. One would be surprised at the different shades of green that appear on the surface of the water—not the healthy green of the ocean deep, but the kind of green that makes one shiver when he looks at it, and when he knows that this is the only water in the district, and that it must be used for drinking purposes, it isn't encouraging. Where we outspanned was really very picturesque. Visions of cool, refreshing sleeps rose within us as we looked at these tall trees, with their tempting shadows, while the brown, sandy road, with alternate sun and shade, and the gaily painted butterflies fluttering here and there, only intensified the peaceful quiet and restfulness of the place. The grass here, although still rather stubby, was the nearest approach to an English lawn we had yet

seen in Africa. The whole scene made us hurry up with our work and get finished quickly, and go over to our lines for our blankets and tunics. After collecting these we selected the shadiest trees, stretched out our blankets, rolled up our tunics into a pillow, and lay down. All that was needed to complete the feeling of contentment was a cigarette, which was duly lit. As I dreamily lay and watched the smoke curling upwards, a sense of utter satisfaction stole over me. The sun was blazing overhead, while here we were cool and at rest under the shade of these big trees. In my dreamy state I grew to love this tree which was sheltering me. I wished it every success in life, and hoped it would grow and bring forth leaves so wonderful, so rare, that travellers from all parts of the earth would come to see and admire them. My

cigarette by this time was finished. My eyes were gradually getting heavier and heavier. I didn't want to go to sleep. I wanted to lie and think about this good tree and how surprised the people would be who came to see it. But I couldn't—nature was beating me. I gave one more struggle. It was no good. I turned over and all was oblivion. Happy were these days. And in our memories they live long after they had gone. After all the hard work of a long march in a blazing sun these bright spots now and then cheered us up and made us more contented with our lot.

As we were saddling up to go away from here two of my troop had a fight. The restfulness of the place had been too great for them. They must get their surplus energy out somehow, so they

fought. I don't know what it was about, but the fact remains that they had a game of fisticuffs, and gave each other a few hard knocks before they were stopped. There was one thing I liked about our fights : we were always good friends afterwards, and nobody bore malice. I wish just to pass a remark before I leave Fort Charter. Some of the fellows went to the store to buy some trifles. On their way they met an officer, who stopped them, and told those who had no tunics to go back at once to camp and put them on, and those who had tunics on to fasten them up immediately. This was in a place, as I said at the beginning of the chapter, of about three white inhabitants. Now, if it had been in Buluwayo, or some big town, I could have seen the force of this order, but—then as now—words

failed to express my indignation and contempt for such men. However, I am pleased to see, since our new Field-Marshal has taken over command, capricious officers are being speedily shifted. He understands that we didn't go to fight the Boers with tunics, but with bullets.

From Fort Charter we changed our mode of marching. On the previous march we had all gone with the convoy, but now only one troop accompanied the waggons. They left at night and the remainder of the squadron the next morning.

This was much better. There was no confusion now, and it kept us from being on the road during the heat of the day. Our march was sometimes through a pretty country—the road, rising to a considerable height, giving us a splendid

view of our surroundings. The long waving grass reminded me very much of the Texan prairie, only now and then the monotony was broken by a little clump of high scrubs, which are not to be found on the prairie of America. One night we had to ride through a veldt fire. It is an awe-inspiring sight. We were encircled for about fifteen miles by this leaping, cracking, scorching hell. The only part that was not burning was the road, but the heat was there all the same. We had a hard struggle to get our horses to face it. Some of us had to dismount and lead our horses through. Other horses, after prancing, bucking, and backing, would suddenly make a plunge through, and it took their riders all they knew to stop them after reaching the other side. My horse luckily walked quietly through and

gave me time to study the flames, which easily reached over our heads, even while on horse back. The whole thing was terribly weird : the blackness of the night was intensified by the glare of the flames. We still heard the hissing and crackling, even when many miles on our way. This was our first experience of a veldt fire. On turning round on our saddles and looking at the scene behind, we beheld a glorious sight.

At this point, two or three days' march from a place called the Range, we were joined by a pack of hyenas and jackals. Well, they did not exactly join us, but they brought up the rear of the column. There must have been at least fifty following us, but I won't be sure on this point, as I didn't go back and count. The other fellows said that must have been about

the number, and I took their word for it.

These animals made us most uncomfortable, barking and whining. If any one wanted to fall out, three or four of his friends waited with him.

Our next place was the Range, which was a junction of the roads for Buluwayo and Victoria. There is telegraphic communication from here to Buluwayo, a native commissioner and several Kaffir huts. Altogether, it is not a place one would choose in which to spend his retiring years. I was on guard the night we stayed here. It was one of the most unpleasant guards I had yet done. Two or three hyenas kept coming out from among the trees and looking at me in a manner which was anything but comforting. Taking everything into considera-

tion, I was pleased when we left this place the next day, a blistering morn in August. On our way we met the Victorians *en route* for Buluwayo.

CHAPTER XI.

THE B.S.A.P.

PASSING the Victorians we had the usual salutations. "Good luck, boys, we'll meet you down south." They had a mule transport which filled us with envy as we had only oxen. About the second or third morning out from the Range another chap and I were on advance guard together. We had gone on pretty far in advance of the squadron. Both of us were sitting easy, humming songs to each other and smoking contentedly, when, happening to glance to the right, I noticed

that the long grass had been trampled as if someone had gone through it with a heavy burden. I drew my companion's attention to it, and we decided to halt, dismount, and investigate. We hadn't gone far in when we heard a noise, and on advancing further we were confronted by a man and a nigger with rifles levelled at us. "Hullo, don't shoot, we're friends," we cried at once. "Ah! so I see," he replied, taking down his own rifle and at the same time telling the nigger to do likewise.

"Have you any tea about you, chums?" he enquired. "I was just having a sleep when my black soldier woke me and whispered in my ear, 'Somebody coming, Baas,' and of course I ran up and grabbed my rifle at once." We happened to have some tea with us at the time, which we

gave him. The nigger had soon a fire lit, the "Billy" boiling, and tea ready. "Won't you sit down and be one of us, chums?" was the way he invited us to partake of his good cheer. Knowing that the squadron would be fully an hour before it passed this spot, we accepted his invitation and sat down. I asked him what he was doing here, and where his horse was? His horse, he said, was tethered to a tree a little distance away, and he was in search of a kaffir convict who had escaped. He had come all the way from Buluwayo alone, but for the black, who was one of the native soldiers. Good men they are, and commonly called the Black Watch. He told us, what we had already guessed, that he was one of the B.S.A. He also told us that he had another 70 or 80 miles to go to a Kaffir

kraal, to which he knew the escaped native had gone. On asking him how many niggers would be living in this kraal, he answered, "about five hundred." "And isn't it a risky job going in among all the blacks?" was my next question. "Oh!" he replied, "I keep my rifle handy, and they know better than move till I get the man I want."

"You know," he continued, "that each man of the B.S.A. goes to sleep every night and believes he is good for at least a thousand niggers."

Finding our time going, we told him we should have to push, or the squadron would be up on us. We wished him a hearty good-morning and good luck on his mission. "All right, chums, if you must go, so long., I may see you again before you leave the country." We

mounted our horses, and got into a swinging gallop to make up for the distance we had lost.

The B.S.A.P., who safeguard one of the outposts of the Empire, get some nasty jobs to do. The troopers I met of this force were all good chaps, all of the "hail-fellow-well-met" brand. They seemed to have no cares and no worry. Of course sometimes, when they got two or three of our chaps ("new chums," as they called us) together, they told us some very tall yarns: how they had been chased for nights at a time by lions, or how many hyenas and snakes they had killed in one night. They told us stories that would have turned any decent man's hair grey. We took most of them, however, *cum grano salis*. They were excellent fellows in spite of that, and we

gave them cigarettes, and asked them to tell us more yarns. One of them told us a story, how one night he had fired his last bullet at a lion. It did the king of the forest no damage, however, and it came on. He knew it was useless running, so just fixed his bayonet and awaited the onslaught. The lion came. He ran his bayonet through its eye right into its brain, then after a few convulsive struggles the beast dropped dead.

A silence, which could have been cut with the blunt end of an assegai, followed this story, broken at last by one of our fellows whistling softly, "O! listen to the band." The B.S.A. trooper turned to us saying, "Believe me or believe me not, it's perfectly true." After we assured him that we all believed him, but millions might not, we gave him a

cigarette and soon had him again yarning. When he left us that night we all agreed that we were "New chums" or "Greenbacks," and ready to believe a great many tales of wonder and adventure, being in a new country, but the lion story was just too thick. There's one thing I do know about this branch of the British army: they don't know what the word "fear" means.

When we were on the march, of course the discipline was relaxed a bit; and after the bugle had rung out "March at ease!" pipes and cigarettes were pulled out and songs asked for and given. There was one chorus we sang nearly every morning after we had got the order to march at ease: "Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war." This we sang with great gusto. Another favourite was, "March,

march, march, the boys are coming." One fellow who was rather sick of the continual marching, made up and sang to the tune of the well-known hymn :

"Trekking, trekking, trekking, always bally well
trekking.

From reveillé until lights out, our work is never
done."

Another chap started thus—
"Halt, who comes there?"

"She may have been born a princess,
She may be lowly of birth."

It was peculiar that in the morning the songs were of the cheeriest description, while at night they were of the saddest. We had a concert on the march nearly every time we had an issue of rum. We looked forward to these concerts, as they

enlivened us considerably. It was fine to be sitting round the big camp fire. Every now and then the niggers cut down branches of trees and threw them on the fire, making the sparks fly heavenwards, and all was cheerful.

About this time the biscuits ran out and we were served out with flour. What an awful job we had baking it! Four of us generally put our flour together and took day about of being baker. What instructions that baking required! One said, "You've got it far too wet." Another remarked, "It would taste just as well if you dispensed with some of the dirt you are mixing with it." Then such arguments we had about the heat of the fire. "It's too hot." "It's not hot enough." "You must put fine ashes on the top first." The men who were looking on

seemed to know more about it than those who were baking. After the flour was baked it looked like a piece of mud hardened. If any of us had eaten the same thing at home it would have stopped every working organ in our bodies. I think the outdoor life and the constant riding made us able to digest anything. Some fellows who could not find any fat to rub round the ball of dough used the dubbin we got to clean our saddles with. This gave the "damper" a rich kind of West Kensington drawing-roomy flavour which was irresistible. Some ate their "damper" just after it had been made, and kicked up such a row at night with the excruciating pains they had to endure! If we baked a big one to last us for three or four days, we had nothing big enough to carry it in but our horses' nose-bags;

and after it had been two or three days in a nose-bag it was as appetising as a bath-brick, and might have been utilised as a steam hammer.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR FIRST SIGHT OF VICTORIA.

WE were glad when we came over the crest of the hill and saw Victoria. It moved most of the men to song. What was the reason of our gladness? Wouldn't we be having a day or two's rest soon? Aren't there stores here where we can buy palatable things? My gladness wasn't long lived, as I took sun-stroke and was laid up for about three days. When I got better I had a walk round, and saw that we were living in Kaffir huts, and that some of the other squadrons had

come up too. Victoria is a quiet little place. There it lies nestling among the hills, its corrugated iron roofs throwing back the glare of the sun, the reflection of which simmers up like will o' the wisp. There is a large square where the barracks of the B.S.A. are situated. This square reminded me of some of the squares in Cairo, being more Oriental than African, but not on nearly such a grand scale. It was surrounded by tropical trees. The streets weren't exactly planned, so one never needed to worry himself wondering how he was going to get from one street to another. The people who reside in Victoria have just dumped down their houses where it pleased them. I may be wrong in saying so, but this is what it looked like. I believe at one time there were prosperous mines here, but

the lode gave out, and that nomadic race, the miners, shifted westwards to Buluwayo.

At one time the white population was close on two hundred; now it can't be more than ten, the females numbering four. Our camp lay on the other side of the river from the town, on a slight elevation. We had nice huts and good bathing up the river, the latter being greatly taken advantage of.

Sometimes we arranged dinners and bought eatables from the store. In my hut there were nine of us. One day we bought a sheep, cabbages, and lots of other stuff. We had a great dinner that afternoon. Some of us were ill the next day. Here *reveillé* went every morning at five o'clock. We had to be up, dressed and saddled by six, then we went for two hours' drill in scouting and tactics. These

drills were enjoyed immensely by us all, we had such great gallops. After the two hours' drill we came back to camp and had breakfast, then stables for an hour. Stables over, we were free till well on in the afternoon.

During these hours of freedom we generally slept, played whist, or went bathing. The heat was so great, however, that one wasn't allowed to do any great exertion, so sleeping was generally the principal amusement. In Victoria we got a big mail which had been waiting for us. No one knows, unless they have been out of touch with civilization for a month or two at a time, how eagerly the arrival of the home mail is awaited.

The bitter disappointment of those who received no letters was distressing. From personal experience I know what it is

like. On the brightest day, when there was a mail and no letter for me, the sun seemed to go down immediately. My poor old horse turned ill here with the scourge of this country, horse-sickness. After I had walked up and down with her for three hours one night, she lay down despite all my efforts to keep her on her feet, gave a few convulsive kicks and died. This pained me greatly, as she had carried me most willingly many a weary mile, and I had grown fond of the beast. I had fully recovered from sun-stroke now, although sometimes I had an attack of dizziness if I stayed too long in the open. Another advantage of Victoria was that most of the fellows who had grown beards got time to shave, and so looked a bit cleaner. Some of these beards were the funniest I ever saw, and

would have puzzled the greatest capillary expert. Then we got our hair cut with horse shears. This was a trying ordeal to go through. If I had known it was going to be such a painful operation, to have my hair cut and get a shave, as it turned out to be, I would have insisted on chloroform.

Our hut engaged two niggers as servants. One of these wasn't greatly struck by the munificent salary we offered him at the end of the first week and refused it, so the other got both screws. A remarkable thing about these niggers is their love of clothes. It doesn't matter how many bits of wearing apparel one gives them, they put them all on at once. For instance, we gave one of our servants a slouch hat and a helmet; on they both went, the one on the top of the other:

a tunic and a shirt; the tunic went on first, the shirt on the outside: a pair of trousers which were far too long for the biggest man in the regiment; however, they were rolled up at the feet and put on too. We next presented three puttees to him for his long service and fidelity; two of these he put on his legs, the other on his arm. Then a big pair of ammunition boots, which fitted him like boats; that didn't seem to matter to him. He was evidently under the impression that he looked much more civilized and handsome with all these things on. I didn't agree with his impression. How that black could be bothered dragging all these things about with him was a mystery.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONCERT.

THE good people of Victoria, together with the B.S.A., thought we were due for a concert (we also were of the same opinion), and accordingly invited us to one. It was held in the Barracks square. A big fire blazed, which was kept replenished from time to time (with wood) by about a dozen niggers. We all sat round one side, opposite the improvised stage. The ladies had the place of honour in the centre. After the concert had gone on for about an hour, one of

the B.S.A. came and whispered in my ear that the canteen was open. I got up on my feet and whispered the good tidings into the fellow's ears next me, then ran. Even with all my speed I was none too soon. When I reached the canteen door, I looked round; the rest were coming on like an avalanche. The concert was deserted, except for the ladies. I don't think we could be blamed even by the strictest Puritan. We had been on the veldt for weeks and had had it rough. The men inside the canteen started an *al fresco* concert of their own. Needless to say, it was rowdier than the one outside. The amount of tall stories that were told that night in the canteen testified to the quality of the gin and ginger. The concert over, we wended our way—not as the crow flies

I am afraid — campward. Fewer men would have slept out on the veldt all night, if the moon had condescended to help them with its light in their difficulties. Thoughts of the spruit at the river, bad enough to cross in the daytime, filled our minds. One fellow in front of me did his best to balance himself on the stones of the ford; but after falling into the river, first on the one side then on the other, he latterly muttered to himself that he'd walk through the water, and never mind doing any more Blondin work. He struggled through and got to the other side, wet but triumphant. I came across him farther up the road, peacefully sleeping, with a bland smile on his face, as of a man who had just overcome great difficulties, and was taking his well-earned rest. On arriving at my hut, I found that

a heated argument was going on among the occupants on the difference between wisdom and knowledge. I don't know what decision they arrived at, as when one of the men was expounding his views in an excited manner, he accidentally sat on the candle. After the light was extinguished confusion reigned supreme. So I, being nearest the door, crawled out, and made my bed under the canopy of the star-decked sky.

Next day was Sunday; we attended Church parade, thirsty and repentant. Just before leaving Victoria we gave the townspeople a concert at our camp. This one was much quieter than the previous one, as we had become used to civilisation again.

Two days after the concert we bade farewell to Victoria. I left it feeling as

if I had enjoyed my stay there. The second day out we discovered we had taken the wrong road, and landed at a place called Paradise Valley. The name fully describes it. If Adam had a place like Paradise Valley to live in, I withdraw any sympathy I had with him for eating that apple. The beauty of the place is gorgeous in the extreme—a little valley of green grass banked on either side with high hills, which were covered with the loveliest and most varied foliage. When we first entered we all stood in amazement; truly we had arrived in a garden of Eden, or a portion of the land of Ophir. On the other side of the hills is Symbabye, and I could build up in my imagination those ancient miners, laying aside their crude implements, and coming from the town beyond the hill, to

Paradise Valley for a picnic after a week's hard work at the mines. I can see them in my mind's eye going down to the little stream that trickles along to wash their clay, hieroglyphically embossed cups. We waited a day in this wonderland. The transport rider did a lot of thinking and sky gazing before he decided which way to go. Latterly he said, if we struck right across the veldt we should come on to the road. We did this, and struck the road lower down near Providential Pass. The waggons had to be dragged over fallen trees, through big holes, under bending branches, to reach the track. I think the niggers have a maxim which says, "Where one man can get through, so can a team of ten oxen and a waggon."

"Hey, wait a bit along there in front, there's a waggon-wheel off;" or "Give us

a hand here ; that branch has pulled nearly everything off this damned waggon." "Two of the centre bullocks down a hole. Hey, tell that driver to look sharp and get them on their feet." The oxen-driver didn't worry. Time is no object with a nigger. Send one a message which should take him an hour, he may come back in a week without completing his duty. He has forgotten all about it.

On we struggled till we got up to the road, which wasn't much better than the one we had left.

A passing word on the land of Ophir. I have always taken a great interest in architecture of all kinds ; and after making a careful study of all the ruins to be found round about this part of Africa, I am inclined, in my humble way, to think with Robertson the historian that this is the

land of Ophir so much spoken of in the Bible. Nearly all writers on this subject are agreed that it took Solomon about a three years' voyage before he reached his haven of rest. Now if in those days a whole tribe started from Egypt to come down the Red Sea to Symbabye, it must have taken them a considerable time to get there. By my way of reckoning, they landed at a point somewhere near Mozambique, as evidenced by the ruins of the same kind one finds up near there. After many days of wanderings and fightings both with man and beast, they reached Paradise Valley and Symbabye, a spot which for its beauty alone, not mentioning anything about its gold, would captivate the eye of Solomon.

CHAPTER XIV.

NEARING TULI.

DURING all this march, the hyenas and jackals still followed in our wake. I remember one night the fellow who was riding next to me was telling me what he had in his nose - bag — “chickens, pigeons, meal, and all sorts of stuff”— trying to make me envious. Turning to get his nose-bag to show it to me to prove that he was telling the truth, he discovered it was not on his saddle. It had dropped off. It must be lying on the road somewhere in the rear. If I came back with

him and helped him to get it he would give me half the contents. I hesitated. Just then a hyena gave a loud cry. I decided I wouldn't. I considered that my life was of more value to me than half whatever was in that nose-bag. Well, he said, I'll go myself, and away he set off at a gallop back. He had been away a good quarter of an hour, and I was beginning to think that our friends behind had actually surrounded him. "Hey, is that you? Did you get your nose-bag?" I shouted. "Don't stop me, don't stop me!" he galloped past and yelled back. "When I was down looking for that bag, these beasts kept coming closer and closer till I thought it was high time to shift. I mounted and galloped away with the whole damned pack after me. They have stopped down behind a bit." It

took him some time before he got over his scare.

At one of the rivers we had great difficulty crossing, the stream being about a mile wide and four feet deep. To see the niggers struggling in front with the oxen, and us behind up to the middle, was a picture. We thought we would never get these waggons across, but after terrible exertions we got them to the other side safely. The opposite bank of the river was exceedingly steep, and it took three spans of twelve oxen each to pull one waggon up. In our journey through this part, we had to build zarebas made of branches right round our camps, and also kept up big fires at night to protect the horses from wild animals. There were two men specially told off to keep these fires blazing. One time we had a rope fixed to

the top of a tree, trying to pull it down for firewood, when the rope broke. There was nearly a whole troop of us hanging on to the rope at this time. Oh! what a calamity when it gave way! Some men got their noses nearly broken, and others their faces cut. However, after giving vent to a few unparliamentary remarks, our sores seemed easier. At one of the rivers we had diving contests. The rocks around this river afforded long dives; one of these I am sure was twenty feet. What we did was, we all put five shillings in the "puggie," then stood with our backs to the water, and one of the fellows who wasn't competing would throw a cup into the deepest pool, which must have been at least fifteen feet deep. We each had a chance, and the man who brought up the cup got the prize. Why some of us didn't get all sorts of diseases

I don't know, for we stayed in the water, when we got the chance, for hours at a time.

One dark night when we were sitting round the fire, a trader glided through the camp riding a white donkey. We were all thunderstruck. We thought there wasn't a white man near us for at least eighty miles. One chap rather aptly expressed our feelings by crying out, "Here, what's the name of that steamer?" The trader never looked round, but passed away into the night as mysteriously and softly as he came. When it wasn't too hot at nights we played at tossing the caber with a big branch of a tree or putting the stone with a piece of rock that one could hardly lift. But concerts were the favourite amusement, as they didn't entail so much exertion as the above violent games, and we

had some good talent among us. At nearly every camp on this route we had to dig for water, but when we did get it, it was splendid, although in some cases it was almost white. When we camped at a distance from a dried up river, it wasn't an enviable job to go at night and draw water from the well we had dug in the day time.

I remember one night we were lying about one thousand yards from a river which had only a little spring of water left. As it so happened it was my turn to go for water. After running over in my mind the stories I had read about lions and other beasts coming down to the river at night to drink, I refused to go unless somebody came with me with a rifle and some dum-dum ammunition. This one of the fellows volunteered to

do, after I had been unmercifully chaffed. We walked nearly out in the middle of the river bed watching for the slightest movement. When we were nearing the spring, my would-be protector stopped me and whispered in my ear, "There's a lion skulking in that undergrowth on the right bank, for a sov." I looked. Yes, sure enough, there were its eyes following us as we moved along; it seemed as if it were just waiting its opportunity for a flank movement. "Will I fire?" he whispered almost inaudibly. "Yes, fire and take good aim, for if you only wound it we are done for," I said. He knelt down, took a long steady aim. Bang! Our hearts were in our mouths to see the result. The echo of the shot reverberated through and through the surrounding trees and up the river. It was most disconcerting.

He had shot it. No, there were its eyes still looking at us. I asked him for the rifle, at the same time asking who in the name of heaven told him he could shoot. We crawled nearer. I lay down to it this time. Bang! I was quite confident I had struck it. We looked fearingly again. No, there were those two eyes. We crawled nearer, wishing to get a better shot next time. "Look here," I said; "I don't believe it's a lion at all." We crawled cautiously nearer and nearer and found that I was right; it was two glow-worms which in our excited imagination we had magnified into the eyes of a lion. When we arrived back into camp after drawing the water, the fellows asked us what all the firing had been about. We told them that we had been attacked by hyenas while drawing water, and we

had to kill two or three before we got away. Verily, verily, this part of Africa is the country for fairy tales! On the banks of the Lundi there dwells a trader and his wife. I can understand how he can put up with the quiet life; but how she can, a woman, so far away from the latest fashions, the shops, and the bargains, is beyond me.

CHAPTER XV.

TULI.

OUR entry into Tuli wasn't dignified. After all the fellows tidying themselves, their harness and horses, we walked in. It was a sad disappointment, as we had decided to give the few inhabitants a treat. It didn't matter, as there were only about ten people in the place. Our camp was a little to the left. After entering the fort there we tied up our horses, then lay down and fell asleep, as we were tired. The next morning some of us took a walk down to the store. Here we met several

of the Rhodesian Volunteers who had been on Plumer's column. They were bemoaning their fate ; they had been left there exactly a year since, and there were no signs yet of their getting shifted. Most of them were mere shadows of what they must have been at one time—fever and dysentery had done its work. Tuli and its surroundings is one of the most fever-stricken districts in Rhodesia. It consists of a store, open trenches topped by sand bags, and an hospital. We waited here a week —long enough. Then we made our way to Crocodile Pools on the Shashi river. The way lay through a perfect avenue of tall trees and palms. Our camp was pitched in a lovely spot near the pools, but in my opinion it wasn't the spot where a doctor would have sent a patient suffering from a bad liver. I have often stealthily

entered other people's domains, and always had the vague fear of a bulldog coming and catching me by the legs ; but this was the first place I had ever seen the somewhat ambiguous warning, " Beware of Crocodiles," stuck up on a board. I never found out where these playful beasts disported themselves. The warning was quite enough for me. When I had to pass the pools where these reptiles were, I gave them about a quarter of a mile radius. If in some unthinking moment we did stand near the water and a man threw a stone, there was a general scatter immediately. We dug out baths on the banks of the river. Our camp here lay in, and was surrounded by, undergrowth and palms. One night I thought I should like a walk, so accordingly strapped on my bayonet and sallied forth among the

palms. I had not gone five hundred yards when I saw a tempting seat formed by a fallen tree. I sat down and lit my pipe. Under the soothing influence of the tobacco I sat dreaming.

In my dreamy state, I turned my eyes to the path I had come, and wasn't greatly enlivened by the sight that met my gaze. A hyena stood staring at me with its big eyes. I sat up and assumed an attitude of what I thought was calm unconcern, but I think the hyena knew I was trying to humbug it. I have read that if you stare with a look of stone at any wild animal it will gradually but surely beat a retreat. I wish the man who invented that story had been in my place that night; I doubt he would have been praying for some heavier instrument than a pair of eyes. The animal seemed to get more

familiar the more I stared ; in fact, I am quite prepared to bet it had pet names for each of my eyes. It began its advance. I threw off my attitude of abandon and tried to impress my opponent at the same time with my prowess as a hyena fighter. It wasn't impressed. It still advanced warily like a cat. I stood up, got my back against my tree, and drew my bayonet. Thoughts of that B.S.A. trooper and his lion story flashed through my mind. I didn't think he was such a liar after all. It was coming near now. Thoughts of my past life flitted through my brain. I had screwed myself up to defend myself to the last. I had got the length of brandishing my bayonet, when my would-be destroyer suddenly turned and fled. At the same time the bushes behind were parted, and a fellow with a

rifle was at my side. "Did you see a hyena about?" he pantingly inquired. I had seen one, I told him; in fact, I had had quite a long interview with one. "Which way did it go?" On telling him he followed it. I often wonder now how I would have come off in a hand to hand fight with the brute. After we had lain at this camp for a time we became friendly with the crocodiles. Although we never saw them, we used to go and sit at night and watch to see if they would come out for a moonlight ramble, but they never came. I think they were too tired, poor things, after their hard day's work carrying about these big jaws of theirs. One fellow actually went in to bathe one day; whether it was to show their appreciation of the errand we were on, or whether they knew he had been on pretty low

feeding lately, they paid no attention. I think this fellow had a sneaking desire to be appointed their kind of great "white chief," as he spent most of his spare time sitting near the pools.

We had a great deal of hard work here cutting down branches of trees and sticking them up in the horse lines. This hard work was, in the blistering sun, most unpalatable to us all. Then the grazing guards were a terrible trial. The horses always seemed to want to eat the grass that wasn't beside them. The result was, some would go one way and others another, and as this was all happening in a forest it was no easy job. Some of the guards had to come in minus ten or fifteen horses; then it took all night to find them. The next place we got orders for was Pont Drift on the Crocodile. We

struck camp and proceeded to get there. We crossed the Shashi. There was only a faint semblance of a stream running on the far side ; the rest was all sand. It is a wide river and fringed on each side, like most African rivers, with lovely undergrowth. After two or three days' trek we came to a place called—I won't give his name's—store. There are some very nasty rumours in connection with the man who kept this canteen. The things that are said about him can't be proved, so I had better not say anything ; but this I know, if any of the B.S.A. were getting hold of him now, they would put a bullet through him and chance it. One of the fellows on guard in this camp one night shot at two hyenas among the horses. The sneaking brutes were beginning to get forward now. From the

aspect of the country here I would say it is very rich in minerals of all kinds, copper especially. Between here and Plumer's Kopje, the next stage, it is sad to see by the wayside, every now and then, little wooden crosses, some without names—simply the words, "Gone but not forgotten," others with the remains of a name written on them, marking the graves of prospectors. The symbols tell their own mournful tale. Coming nearer Plumer's Kopje, we see on the left of the road a little graveyard, with rude railing and stones encircling it. We leave the ranks to see who is buried here. Then the war is brought forcibly home to us. They are the graves of the brave fellows who were forced through overwhelming numbers to retreat from the Crocodile river, fighting every inch of the way.

Think of them lying there lonely in the sun-dried, wind-swept, melancholy veldt, far away from civilization !

“Fighting they lived and fighting they fell ;
Where are their spirits now, who can tell ?”

If I had anything to do with their future state, to men like these I would ask no questions, pass no remarks ; I would simply say : “Pass, friends, all’s well.” On passing these lonely graves it fills one with sad thoughts.

The men who have been singing before suddenly stop, then pass on in silence. Some of us took off our hats, others saluted : whether there was any outward sign or not, each in his heart felt sad.

CHAPTER XVI.

PLUMER'S KOPJES.

PLUMER'S Kopjes are a long range of small hills of about 30 feet high. I believe the B.S.A. fellows made a most gallant stand here, and when they saw they were likely to be outflanked ten of them volunteered to hold the place till the others with waggons and baggage retired towards Tuli. This they did running along the Kopje firing here and there, and the enemy actually never suspected that the main body had retreated. After giving the main body a fair chance to get away, they

mounted their horses and galloped for dear life, with the enemy in hot pursuit. They arrived in safety at the next camp, which had been better fortified. All honour to them! From Plumer's Kopje we slowly continued our way.

Along with three others I was on grazing guard near Pont Drift one day when a nigger came up with two great big jars of Kaffir beer and milk.

He asked about 10s. for the two. We told him that was ridiculous. Ten shillings! Why, we would want his whole Kaffir hut for that. Latterly, after showing him what we could buy for half a sovereign, he clearly saw how unreasonable he had been, and in a sort of apologizing voice for asking too much at the start, he said he would give us the two for 2s. Now, we assured him he was getting much

more reasonable. We decided we would buy his stuff. We had nothing but gold. A consultation was held. Would we trust him to bring back the change? "Ya Baas, me good nigger." We gave him the money; he set off promising to be back soon. Meanwhile we sat down to enjoy the beer and milk; both were splendid. This Kaffir beer had a pleasant, sweet taste. It was now nearly sundown, we would have to take in the horses shortly; we scanned the horizon — no nigger. I am afraid if we had waited till that nigger came back we should have been fossilized. Ah, we were too simple for this country; even the niggers were having us. We brought in the horses with heads bowed down, and looked like men who had just met with a great reverse. "Ya, Baas, me good nigger." If we had

ever met him again he wouldn't have had that childlike expression on his face very long. "Ya, Baas, me good nigger." Yes, you were ; you must have been educated at some of the mission stations.

Our next camp was pitched at Pont Drift.

CHAPTER XVII.

PONT DRIFT.

THE scenic beauty round Pont Drift is grand. On the left rises a kopje sheer out of the ground, on the right is an immense forest. Down straight in front of us runs the great Crocodile River. What a picture of nature ! The great primeval forest in all its splendour : the grand old trees casting their sunshine and shadow—their leaves with their wonderful depths of colour—the gentle mimosa bushes with their long prickly thorns, forms a veritable fairyland !

One day, while looking for a horse that

had broken out of camp, I lost myself in the forest. My feelings may be better imagined than described. If I had had my rifle with me I should not have been so alarmed. I could have kept myself till the search party found me, and I could also, by firing it occasionally, have made use of it as a guide; but I hadn't even my bayonet on. At the thoughts of water my lips began to be parched. Only those who have been in a like predicament can have the slightest idea what my feelings were. At first, when I knew I was lost, I felt as if I would just sit down and die. Then I would take courage and try to find the way back to camp. I tried one way, then another, always of course coming back to the tree I started from. The very monkeys jumping from tree to tree seemed to know I was lost, and to

be jeering at me. After I had wandered about for three hours I sat down and gave myself up to despair.

Then a voice within me seemed to whisper, "Don't be a coward; try again." I tried again, but with the same success as before. Lost! I remembered all the men who had been lost on Plumer's column on the different parts of the road.

What a death! If I only knew which was north or south I could find my way. Going due south meant I must reach the Crocodile, no matter how long I took. After a long study I said to myself, "I'll go this way and risk it." I went. I was right: I hadn't been a mile from the Crocodile all the time. Pleased wasn't the word for it when I struck this river. Now I knew which way to take; walk away from the sun and I would come

to the drift, a little bit from which our camp was pitched. When I got back to camp I lay down utterly exhausted, not so much from the walking but from the excitement. I hope I'll never get lost again in any of my future travels. The feelings of utter helplessness I had, of nausea and sickness that came over me, seemed to take away my fortitude. I don't put myself forward as a hero, nor would I admit I was a coward, but I don't want to be lost again. It is an experience to unnerve the bravest!

We were on short rations here, and our clothes were beginning to get into tatters. I reached the stage of mixing the horses' bran with my day's ration of flour to make my loaf bigger. We steeped the mealies for the horses overnight, and made a kind of coarse porridge of them in the

morning. I don't know how this happened or whose fault it was; I didn't pry into it. Suffice it to say that we were on short food the whole time we were at this camp, which was about a month. We were ordered to repair the pont across the river. This was great fun. We stripped ourselves naked, bar our shirts, which were kept on to save us from the sun. The water in some parts reached our waists. We had to dig the pont out of the sand. There was a great deal of larking went on. One fellow with a look of the innocence of a child would accidentally throw a shovelful of sand down another man's back. "Oh, I'm very sorry, but you know it was your own fault." "It wasn't my fault; you tried it." Then from that they would throw handfuls of sand at one another. Then from handfuls it would go to shovel-

fuls. Then they would lay down their shovels and clutch one another and try and see who could duck the other. We took this job troop, about, so that gave each troop a spell. It was fine. This camp was actually alive with scorpions and tarantulas. Whenever the fire was lit at night they would come out. The light seemed to attract them. We got a tarantula and scorpion one night to fight —such a fight it was too. Neither gave in. The scorpion was killed and the tarantula died shortly after! This place abounds in guinea-fowl. We picked up near this camp the best "boy" that we ever had; he could make something out of nothing in the cooking line, and that was what suited us. He could trap guinea-fowl by tying loops in the grass and then chasing the birds towards his trap; it was

very cleverly arranged. He could build lovely shades; in fact he was a perfect gem of a servant. He stayed with us till we reached Kimberley.

What nights we had round the big camp fire here! what stories we told—things that never happened, things that did happen. What songs we sang! How some nights we sang sad ones—how the tears would trickle down some fellow's cheek when the song brought up some forgotten scene or act, and how on such nights we insisted on singing dreary songs. It is peculiar how the surroundings bring on these feelings of loneliness. One would think that the whole tendency would be to sing cheery songs to brighten us up, but it isn't: the sadder the song the better pleased you feel. I noticed the same thing on the American prairie when the cowboys had

a sing-song; the songs that were sung were all of the dirge order. It was all very strange. The flame of the fire among the tall trees, the coffee-pot being passed round, pipes in all the men's mouths or hands, listening to a man telling some blood-curdling story. We had a thunder and lightning storm here, the first tropical one I had seen. The heavens above seem to open and crash like the tremendous noise of a shell a "ten thousand pounder" would make bursting, and the lightning seemed to dance in and out the trees. Then a sudden flash would appear, absolutely blinding you for a second or two. I was on night patrol on this particular night. I was glad when daylight broke. If I had had much more of it I should have gone demented. The awful silence, followed by a terrific crash overhead. The

vividness of the lightning gave one the thoughts that they must have left the earth and were in some place of torment, "where," as Burns tells, "coffins stood like open presses."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LIONS.

ONE day the order came that the squadron was to proceed to Braek River, near Zoutpansberg, leaving an empty waggon to bring on the stores which were to arrive two or three days later. Four of us were told off to wait with this empty waggon to act as guard for it when it was filled up. We four had a splendid time these two days, shooting, bathing, and exploring. We arranged so that one remained in camp to look after the horses and cook the "skoff" while the other three went and enjoyed themselves.

It was fine after a day's shooting or swimming to come back to camp in the cool of the afternoon, and find the big fire blazing, with the nigger busy making tea. A little from the fire was the table, consisting of two boxes, one on end and the other flat, with a nice clean waterproof sheet spread across for the table cover. Our chairs were made of boxes with a bit of white paper thrown over them. Before sitting down to tea we had to brush our hair, which we did with the horses' curry comb and dandy brush. With a little stretch of imagination one could have thought that he was out on a jolly old British picnic, but we weren't. At night we slept on the waggon ; it kept us away from scorpions, centipedes, tarantulas, and all other creeping things. As there was no room for our rifles or

bandoliers on board, we left them lying up against a rock which was within easy distance.

The second night we were here, just after we had turned in for the night, the black oxen-driver came rushing over, shouting, "Lion, Baas, lion!" One of the four, who was rather humorously inclined, asked him if it was the British lion. "Icona British lion, Icona British lion. Wait a bit, Baas; it is the Rhodesia lion," was answered by the wielder of the long whip, in excited strains. We in our ignorance, and not having the same quick ear as he had, told him to shut up and go to bed. "Me no sleep, me build fire." "Well do what the devil you like, only don't disturb us," we told him. He forthwith proceeded and built a tremendous fire, heaping on branches and old boxes.

Some of his fire was made of our table which we had been so proud of, but we didn't discover this until the morning. The horses now began to neigh and prance and kick up a row generally. There was something wrong. "Listen!" One fellow touched me on the arm. "That nigger's right enough; there is a lion about; I heard it just now." We all listened intently, scarcely even our breathing being audible. A roar like some sea beating on a distant shore could be heard in the distance. This brought the nigger away from the fire, and up to our waggon at a breakneck pace. "Me lie under your waggon, Baas; lion no get me there." "All right," we replied; "but before you go under, hand us over our rifles." But would he? No. He crawled underneath and refused to

move. Another roar, this time much nearer. "Come out of there, will you, and get us our rifles," we shouted at him. "Icona Baas, Icona Baas, lion too near," was all the terrified native replied. A long - drawn - out wail was next heard, further away. "It's all right, Bocay, the lion's going away." "Is it, Baas?" in a muffled voice from underneath. "That is another lion, a she one." He was right. We could hear their united roars coming nearer and nearer. We got alarmed. One of us jumped out, got the rifles and bandoliers, drew them inside and tumbled in again. We each took up a position at the four corners of our improvised fortress, and were soon hard at work rubbing the noses off our bullets. The blood-curdling cries of the approaching king and queen of the forest came nearer

rations into our own one, and set off the next morning at daybreak on our three days' lonely march to the rest of the squadron.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE ROAD TO BRAEK RIVER.

WE crossed the Crocodile, filling our water-barrel during the crossing. We meant to guard this water with our lives, as we knew we would get no more but salt water out of some magnesia springs half-way to the Braek River. The water tank we carefully placed on the top of the waggon, and told the driver to watch it. We were now in the Transvaal. We saw the places that Cronje had fortified at the beginning of the war, in case of an attack from the North. The four of us

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rations into our own one, and set off the next morning at daybreak on our three days' lonely march to the rest of the squadron.

of the choir—and oh! how can I tell it! our water cask, knocking the cork out of the bung hole. Before we could get the rest of the things from off the top of it, the water had all trickled out! What dismay! Oh, the sadness that crept round our hearts! No more sing-song, no more funny stories—all was darkness. We knew and thoroughly realized what was before us. The hot, blistering, scorching sun would be up in an hour or so. We would get dry, we would get parched, our lips began to crack already. No water. Yes, there was that salt water: if we touched it we would only be worse. We got the things back on to the waggon in silence, and mounted our horses without exchanging a word. We dreaded the break of day. We came to the spring. We outspanned, and we didn't go near

the water. We ate our hard biscuits, divining each other's thoughts. After we had sat in silence for a while, one fellow said, "I must drink it," so did another. "Let's make tea of it, it may not be so bad that way." Tea was made; it wasn't so bad, but the salt was there all the same, which we found out to our cost—that night, when we had finished another trek.

By the time we had tied up our horses and fed them, poor things, they felt the want of a drink as badly as we did. We were thirsty. We could hardly speak to one another. We asked the nigger driver if he had anything of any description at all to drink. When he answered no, I thought he wasn't just sticking to the British standard of truth. We knew, however, if he had any he would have it

hidden where we couldn't get at it. So, under the circumstances, I thought that the best thing I could do was to lie down and try and get to sleep. This I accordingly did. I lay down and tossed about for a long while, half sleeping, dreaming of the gallons I had wasted in my life. Here was I, couldn't even get some mud to squeeze. I thought of the streets at home after a snow-storm when a thaw had set in, and one struggled through the slush in his snow shoes. The proceedings were enlivened by one of the shoes sticking in the melting snow, and the unfortunate pedestrian hopped home on one leg. In the morning he had a sore throat, which generally developed into croop or asthma or some other horrible disease, which kept him in the house till just the day after that dance for which

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he had bought a new dress suit, ties, and gloves, to simply go and kill that girl he was in love with. One had funny thoughts in a case of this kind. I was rolling about cursing my luck when I was rudely pushed on the shoulder, and a voice in a hoarse whisper : " Matey, Matey, do you want a drink ? " I looked at him with imploring eyes, at the same time saying : " Now none of your Kidfontein—go away and let me alone." " It's right enough," he replied. " I foraged round and found that the driver had water, which I pinched. Here, have a drink," at the same time producing a canvas bag filled with the glorious liquid. I drank long and deep ; so did the rest. It would have been much better if we had drunk less, as we all got cramp in the stomach.

In the morning we saddled up and went

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on our way, reaching the Braek River and our outspan at night. We were welcomed with great rejoicing by the rest of the boys, as we had the mails with us.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CAMP AT BRAEK RIVER. ZOUTPANSBERG.

THIS is the most ungodly place in which ever white man was called to live. The principal crops are fevers and the tsetse fly. If this fly touches a horse, you may as well go and dig a trench for the equine. What a God-forgotten place it is! The trees seemed to be ashamed to grow in the place. I remember the transport rider cursing his luck at having to stay in Zoutpansberg. He told me that he was engaged to take the troops through Rhodesia only, and if we were going to

stay here much longer, he would leave the sanguinary waggons, and make his way back alone. He said that this would be an ideal site for intending suicides to pitch a camp. They had the option of various deaths—well, they hadn't exactly the option, but they had a great chance. If after a shower or two of rain they didn't die with malaria or dysentery, they had still typhoid or enteric on which to fall back. Everything seemed to have a sickly appearance. The alleged grass seemed pleased if you tramped on it and killed it right out. The river at this point had that look of disappointment that in a man denotes having tried for great objects, and having failed, was eking out existence. The sun rose over the trees in the morning with an apologetic air, as if asking pardon for demeaning

itself, and its old traditions, by shining on such a place. The very ropes with which we tied up our horses seemed to be withering away. The moon seemed to shine at night here paler than any place else, as if echoing the sentiments of the sun. This paleness of the moon showed up the ghastliness of the hole we were in. There were no scorpions nor tarantulas, no wild beasts ; they had better sense. A shower of rain came on. We waited. Who was going to be first ? Six carried over to the hospital. This cheered us up a bit—only six—that was good, we must have constitutions like iron. A wet night next—a great many more helped to hospital. We had a concert one night to help to dispel the gloom. It only intensified it, however. The humorists, who used to keep us in fits of laughter,

insisted on singing gloomy songs. If they started a comic song, it was sure to end up in a wail. All this time we were living on half rations. The troops tried to augment these by catching the half-dead fish in the river. After they caught them they wouldn't eat them.

When the order came that we were to leave this camp immediately, and retrace our steps to Pont Drift, we cheered ourselves hoarse. Then it wasn't true after all what the chaps had been saying, that we were brought here to die. No, it wasn't—another cheer—we are leaving the worst camp in Africa. Now we could laugh at the night when the rain had come and drenched us lying at our saddles in the horse lines, when most of us appeared in the morning with uniforms that weren't just according to any regulation.

Some with an old torn vest and the trouser part of an old ragged pyjama suit; others with under-drawers and an old torn tunic; others with absolutely nothing on but a cavalry coat. Now we could laugh at all these things when we were going away. It didn't need any second command to get our horses and everything ready for the departure in the morning. I think very few of us slept that night, we were so glad.

We left the next morning singing merrily, and we weren't long till we were back at Pont Drift. We arrived at Pont Drift in a terrible rain-storm. From here we pursued our way back to Tuli, recrossing the Shashi after much difficulty, as both roads and rivers were in a dreadful state after the recent rains. At Tuli we encamped near the Shashi on the Buluwayo

Road. A singular story went about the troops here. I won't vouch for the accuracy of it, it seems so strange. One of the Australian Bushmen was taken to hospital with malaria. He was taken into one of the sister's wards. During one of the days of his convalescence, the nurse asked him what part of Australia he came from. On mentioning his country, she remarked, "That's peculiar; that's where I come from, and I'm positive I've seen your face before." After various questions being asked from one another, the Bushman asked the nurse her Christian name. After getting that, he muttered, "That proves it." "Proves what?" the nurse asked. "That I'm your brother Bob." Such was the case; they hadn't seen each other for something like fifteen years.

We had church parade one day. The

parson kept us waiting in a scorching sun for over twenty minutes. If some of his congregation had got hold of him when he did come up, he wouldn't have preached much that day, I'll bet.

Some of the Bushmen's remarks near me were much more pointed than polite. That service wasn't carried out by the men with that meekness of spirit we were taught to have at school.

The March again.

The morning we marched out of camp for Buluwayo the New Zealanders came down with their bugles and a drum made out of buckskin and sides of boxes, and played us out. It was a kindly compliment. This was a trying march, as we did nearly forty miles a day. What water we drank ! Sometimes it was like mud ; other times

as white as chalk. Either of the two kinds was both meat and drink. The officers tried their best to keep us from drinking it unless it had been boiled, but they might as well have tried to stop the tide in its movements. When a man in a position like this gets thirsty, he throws all discretion to the winds, and will drink anything. All along this road, evidence of the Matabele Revolt could be seen in the ruins of stores that were dotted here and there by the way. Nearly every one of these ruins had a grave close by. We passed the mail coach on its way down to Tuli—a splendid sight with its mule team. Our first big halting-place was called Manzinyama. It is a beautiful spot in the midst of a beautiful country, with tall trees and green lawns, and lovely cactus plants growing by the wayside.

CHAPTER XXI.

BULUWAYO.

BULUWAYO (with the emphasis on the y, thus Bulūwŷo) is an extremely pretty town, and the roads leading into and away from it are much better than we had met with on any other part of our trek through Rhodesia.

Between Fort Tuli and Buluwayo we averaged a speed of about thirty-five miles per day, which in my opinion was good going, considering the state of the roads and the excessive heat. The condition of most of us, as may be imagined, during

these rides was pitiable, pacing along with water-bottles; empty, alas! long since; a sun scorching and unrelenting, and a thirst that seemed to be eating into our very vitals. On we went, our little khaki column scarcely recognisable from the dust of the roads, with set and stern faces towards the goal. The two hundred miles of the journey we covered in six days. The poor horses, uncomplaining and dumb, felt it most, I think, as at the end of a day's trek many of them were hardly able to totter to the water, which was green and muddy. Once there, they were allowed to drink to their hearts' content. This they did with evident relish, and the new life which the uninviting water infused was as pleasing to the trooper as to the animal itself. We arrived at Buluwayo tired but triumphant.

During one of our hottest and thirstiest

days of the march, an incident occurred which gave me a better idea of a mirage than all the books I have ever read, and the impression it left was one of sincere sympathy for the weary traveller in other parts, who has been tempted off his way only to meet with an untimely and torturous death. I happened to be one of the advance guard, about fifty miles from Buluwayo, with a thirst that troubled every one of the guard painfully, and made each eye more keen on the scent of the ever-sought-for water. Suddenly one of the foremost shouted, "There's water in the right front,"—information which brought us to an immediate halt, and raised each drooping head. One comrade we sent into the veldt where we thought the water lay, and as he left us we threw him our water-bottles to fill.

Forward he went, but when he came to where we thought it lay, he turned round and shook his head. "On a bit further," we shouted, at the same time pointing a little to the left; but the nearer he approached, the supposed water seemed to leave and go a bit further on; and again we shouted, "further on yet." He did this repeatedly, but always with the same result, and our hopes, which had been raised high, faded, as we saw our friend turn and retrace his steps. When he rode up he said in an irritable voice, "Are you chaps making fun of me? There is no water there." We looked in amazement at each other, and after discussion we concluded that we had experienced the effect of our first mirage. We patted our horses encouragingly, and set off at a trot to make up for the time we had wasted,

with our thirst worse than ever, the said thirst having by this time reached alarming dimensions, making the sufferer liken himself unto a long stretch of bare ground, parched and cracked, waiting yearningly on the rain that never came.

When we reached Manzimyama, nearly half-way between Tuli and Buluwayo, we tethered our horses, watered and fed them, and threw ourselves down, thoroughly exhausted. In the morning, while saddling up, we had a total eclipse of the sun. It was grand. About nine o'clock a kind of greyness stole across the sky, the grey tint grew deeper and deeper, till it almost reached the colour of ending twilight. Then everything turned to pale blue, giving the same effect as electric light gives in a slight fog. This dimness slowly gave way to a bright blue light,

which suddenly burst forth into a splendid moonlight. We stopped saddling up; stood open-mouthed and amazed. Some of us were under the impression that the Millennium had at last arrived, and awaited in breathless excitement for the final burst up of the earth. This untoward incident didn't happen, however, and the whole scene passed away like a dream as strangely weird as it had come.

We arrived in Buluwayo six days after leaving Tuli, and in the former town we lay for two days, doing our best to spend the money we possessed. I think most of us succeeded in this worn-out experiment beyond our wildest hopes.

There are some grand and handsome buildings in Buluwayo. The streets are all nicely laid out with trees in Boulevard fashion. Then it is so up-to-date in other

things notwithstanding its youth, most of the public buildings and hotels and nearly all the streets being lit with electricity.

The people of the town have a splendid hospital too, in which the doctors and sisters were most kind to any of our fellows who needed their aid.

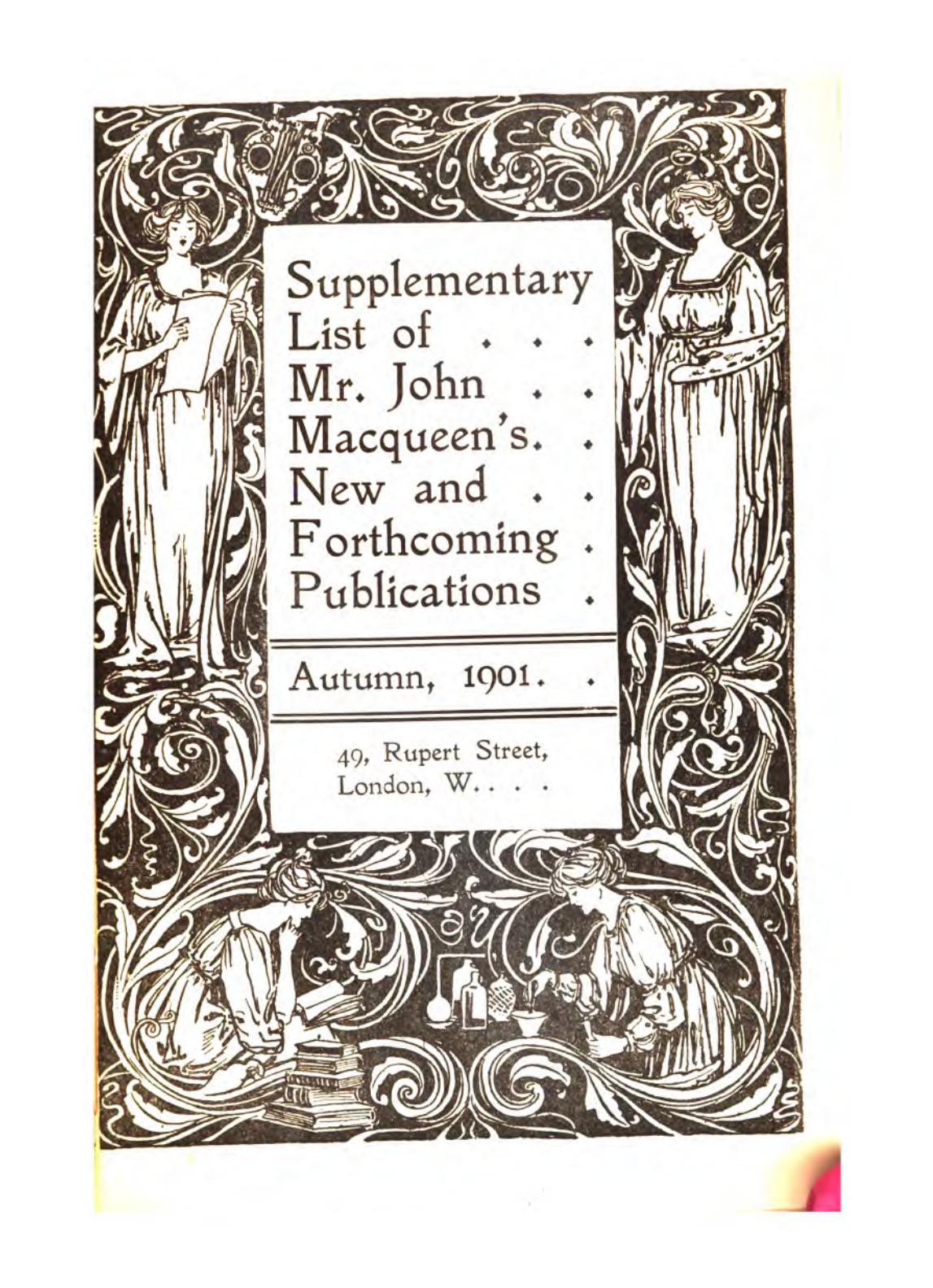
Taking the march all over, I found that, barring a few occasions, I was well treated in hospital when it was possible. At Twenty-three Mile Peg and Bamboo Creek the hospital was not what it might have been, but to whom can the blame be attached? That's a thing I can't answer. Just a word before closing about the resources of Rhodesia. I was only No. 15513 in Her Majesty's Army, but in my opinion, when Rhodesia is opened up with railways it will be one of the wealthiest colonies of

the British Empire. I will now leave it to my reader's power of conception to imagine us sitting in the trucks cleaning our rifles for the hard fighting we anticipate when we reach Mafeking.

When we reached Mafeking—— But
“that is another story.”

THE END.

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[September.]

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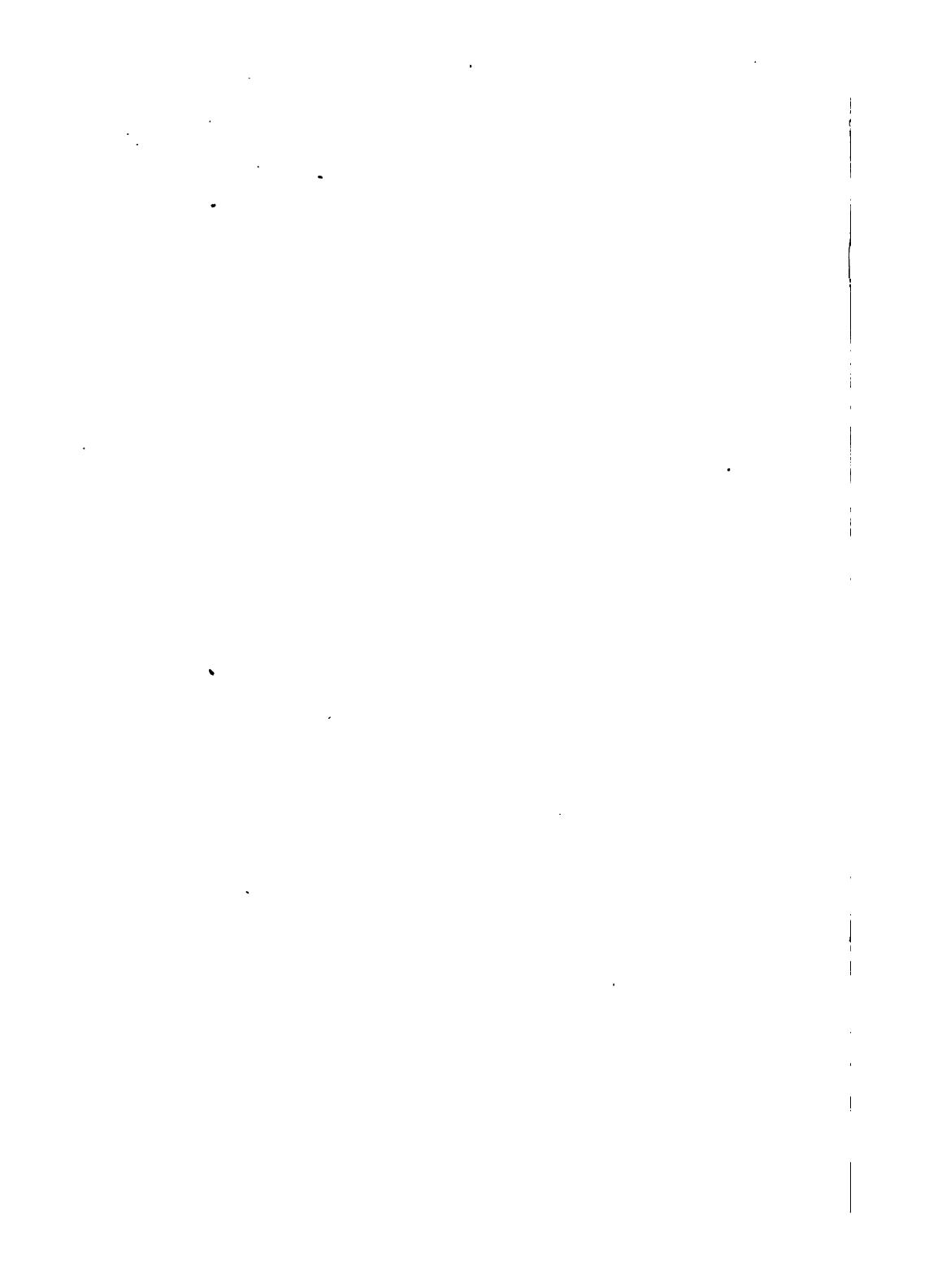
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